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Twenty Years Fighting Violence Against Women and Girls

September 2014



“For too long, we have ignored the right of women to be free from the fear of attacks based on their gender.”

Senator Joseph Biden, June 20, 1990



“You cannot have a conversation about human rights and human dignity without talking about the right of every woman on this planet to be free from violence and free from fear.”

Vice President Joseph Biden, April 2, 2013

This report was prepared by the Office of the Vice President to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act.

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Overview

20 Years Fighting Violence Against Women

Twenty years after the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), many citizens cannot remember a day in which Americans ignored this violence, or worse, condoned it.¹ The papers are flooded daily with stories from abroad—of gang rapes and kidnappings, of honor killings and acid attacks, of a child shot for promoting girls’ education.² History tells us, however, that what we see today so clearly as an assault on human dignity *abroad* has not always been seen so clearly at *home*.

Twenty years ago, for most citizens, domestic violence and sexual assault were covered by a veil of ignorance and inattention, an open secret, acknowledged but ignored.³ In the late 1970s and early 1980s, public officials openly declared that the federal government had no role to play, that battling domestic violence was a “private family matter.” Then, members of Congress complained that federal intervention was “anti-family,” that shelters were “indoctrination centers” filled with “missionaries who would war” on the family, that domestic violence was somehow akin to “spanking” or “nagging.”⁴ Citizens dismissed sexual assault and battering by blaming the victim—“She asked for it,” “she wore a short skirt,” “she drank too much.”

In 1990, when it was first introduced, the Violence Against Women Act gave a new name and a new voice to an ancient tragedy. To name something new is to have an idea of a better future. But a better future cannot exist without the hard work over months and years of many, many women and men—survivors and advocates, prosecutors and police, scientists and state officials. Over the course of twenty years, VAWA has become a mosaic built by hundreds of thousands of Americans—from public servants to state officials and survivors—all of whom have helped the nation emerge from a fog of dismissal and distrust.

In the name of every survivor who has suffered, of every child who has watched that suffering, the battle goes on; much remains to be done. Until the collective moral imagination of America has

¹ S.C. Res. 1820, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1820 (June 19, 2008); Enrique Gracia, Intimate Partner Violence Against Women and Victim-Blaming Attitudes Among Europeans, 92 *Bill*, World Health Org. 380 (2014).

² Rama Lakshmi, Gang rape of a woman on a bus in New Delhi raises outrage in India, *Wash. Post*, Dec. 18, 2012; Tom de Castella, How many acid attacks are there?, *BBC News*, Aug. 9, 2013; Laura Smith-Spark, Third of teens in Amman, Jordan, condone honor killings, study says, *CNN*, June 20, 2013; Richard Leiby, Taliban says it shot Pakistani teen for advocating girls’ rights, *Wash. Post*, Oct. 10, 2012.

³ Elizabeth Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of American Social Policy Against Family Violence* 185 (2004) (“Rape and wife beating were often compared; each was a taboo subject, rarely discussed in public, except as a joking matter.”); see Michelle J. Anderson, Diminishing The Legal Impact of Negative Social Attitudes Toward Acquaintance Rape Victims, 13 *New Crim. L. Rev.* 644, 658 (2010).

⁴ This debate occurred around the first federal effort to fund shelters, The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, which took a 7 year effort. See 126 Cong. Rec. 24120 (1980) (statement of Sen. Helms); 126 Cong. Rec. 22797 (1980) (statement of Sen. Humphrey).

changed, this violence will continue. One day, we hope future generations will look back and wonder how this nation, founded upon the call of liberty and freedom, could have tolerated such violence and contrived such fanciful justifications to sustain it. Perhaps someday in the future, they will remember the beginning of an idea of a better future that became known as the Violence Against Women Act.

Since it was originally passed and signed into law in 1994, VAWA has been reauthorized three times.⁵ Over that period, **VAWA has:**

- **Reduced intimate partner violence against men and women,**
- **Decreased the personal and social cost of gender-based violence, and**
- **Changed the prevailing culture around this violence.**

In this report, we open with a brief summary of how VAWA has helped to change America. We discuss the many ways in which VAWA has increased accountability and access to services and has reached underserved communities. The appendix provides details from over 100 programs throughout the country that VAWA has helped to inspire and support.

⁵ VAWA was reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and 2013.

Twenty Years of Progress

Lives Saved

Yearly domestic violence rates dropped dramatically by **64%** from 1993 to 2010.⁶ Between 1993 and 2012, the number of individuals killed by an intimate partner declined 26% for women and 48% for men.⁷

Money Saved

VAWA has helped the country save billions of dollars. One study showed that VAWA saved an estimated **\$12.6 billion** in net averted social costs in its first 6 years alone.⁸ In just one state, orders of protection saved \$85 million in a single year through quality of life changes and savings in medical, criminal justice and other costs.⁹

Justice Improved

VAWA-funded entities show highly increased rates of prosecution. The evidence collected by VAWA-funded specialized police units is more likely to be useful for prosecution,¹⁰ leading to higher rates of prosecution, conviction, and sentencing.¹¹ Jurisdictions with specialized domestic violence prosecution programs generally have the highest rates of successful prosecution.¹²

Services Improved

Comprehensive advocacy, assistance and legal services programs improve the lives of survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Victims who receive comprehensive services and advocacy like

⁶ Shannon Catalano, United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2010, NCJ 239203 (2012).

⁷ United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (unpublished data).

⁸ Kathryn Anderson Clark, et al., A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, 8 Violence Against Women 417 (2002) (amended to \$12.6 billion in Erratum, 9 Violence Against Women 136 (2003)).

⁹ TK Logan, et al., The Kentucky civil protective order study: A rural and urban multiple perspective study of protective order violation consequences, responses, and costs, NCJ 228350 (2009).

¹⁰ Meg Townsend, et al., Law Enforcement Response to Domestic Violence Calls for Service, NCJ 215915 (2006).

¹¹ Annette Jolin, et al., Beyond Arrest: The Portland, Oregon Domestic Violence Experiment, Final Report, NCJ 179968 (1999); David Holleran, et al., Examining Charging Agreement Between Police and Prosecutors in Rape Cases, 56 Crime & Delinquency 385 (2010).

¹² Barbara E. Smith, et al., Evaluation of Efforts to Implement No-Drop Policies: Two Central Values in Conflict, Final Report, NCJ 187772 (2001).

those funded by VAWA are more likely to achieve their goals of safety, healing, and economic security than women not receiving such support and services.¹³

Technology and Tools Improved

Lethality prediction tools have produced significant drops in homicide in some jurisdictions;¹⁴ forensic evidence collection has been improved by special sexual assault nurse examiner programs; DNA evidence is being collected; and communities that are testing old rape kits are apprehending serial offenders.¹⁵

Challenges Ahead

Rates of Violence are Too High

As long as there remains one victim of this violence, the rates will be too high. We know this violence is preventable and zero-tolerance must be our aim.

Young Women are at High Risk

If one in five young women suffered from a disease, we as a nation would find a solution to that problem; but when it comes to violence against young women, we have known this statistic for 20 years.¹⁶ We have made substantial national efforts in the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault and will continue to push hard on this problem.

Bias Still Exists in the System

No one says that men who are robbed or slashed went to the wrong place or wore the wrong clothes, but they do say this about women. At the workplace or in schools, the law calls such victim-

¹³ Eleanor Lyon, et al., Meeting survivors' needs through non-residential domestic violence services and supports: Results of a multi-state study, NCJ 237328, 90 (2011).

¹⁴ Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, Annual Report 2012 -2013, http://mnadv.org/_mnadvWeb/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/mnadv-annual-report_final-single-pages.pdf; Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, Newburyport Domestic Violence High Risk Team, Safety and Accountability Report: 2005-2013, <http://jeannegeigercrisiscenter.org/dvhrtn.html?pg=04>.

¹⁵ Kym L. Worthy, Wayne County Prosecutor, Press Packet for the Proposed Sexual Assault Kit Evidence Submission Act (2014), available at http://media.mlive.com/news/detroit_impact/other/2014%20March%2010%20-%20Press%20Packet%20for%20SAK%20ESA%20press%20conference.pdf.

¹⁶ Beverly Miller & Jon C. Marshall, Coercive Sex on the University Campus, 28 Journal of College Student Personnel 38 (1987).

blaming, sex stereotypes by the name of sex discrimination; so too should they bear this name in our criminal justice system.¹⁷

Health and Social Costs are Too High

We know that violence in the home may beget more violence in the home and the streets;¹⁸ we know that this violence distorts the lives and minds of children;¹⁹ we know that resulting health costs are enormous,²⁰ even though small investments in preventing this violence can have enormous rewards.²¹

A Renewed National Effort

VAWA has funded programs that we know work at the state and local level, but for a truly zero-tolerance effort, this is not enough. The federal government can work to end sex stereotyping in rape trials and help states meet their existing requirements to address still shockingly high levels of lethal domestic violence.²² For problems that have resisted twenty years of state and local change, America should use its federal powers.

¹⁷ See United States Department of Justice Letter to Missoula County Attorney (Feb. 14, 2014), available at http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/spl/documents/missoula_ltr_2-14-14.pdf (“where a law enforcement agency's failure to adequately respond to allegations of sexual assault is premised, at least in part, on sex-based stereotypes, that failure violates the Equal Protection Clause.”).

¹⁸ Charles L. Whitfield, et al., Violent Childhood Experience and the Risk of Intimate Partner Violence in Adults, 18 *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 166 (2003); Deborah Gorman-Smith, et al., Partner Violence and Street Violence among Urban Adolescents: Do the Same Family Factors Relate?, 11 *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 273 (2001).

¹⁹ Cathy S. Widom & Michael G. Maxfield, National Institute of Justice, Research Brief: An Update on the “Cycle of Violence” (2001), available at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/184894.pdf>; Vincent J. Felitti & Robert F. Anda, The Relationship of Adverse Childhood Experiences to Adult Medical Disease, Psychiatric Disorders and Sexual Behavior: Implications for Healthcare in *The Impact of Early Life Trauma on Health and Disease* (ed. Ruth A. Lanius, et al.) (2010).

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Rachel Boba & David Lilley, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) funding: A nationwide assessment of effects on rape and assault, 15 *Violence Against Women* 168 (2009).

²² Jennifer Temkin, “And Always Keep a Hold of Nurse, For Fear of Finding Something Worse”: Challenging Rape Myths in the Courtroom, 13 *New Crim. L. Rev.* 710 (2010); Violence Policy Center, *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2011 Homicide Data* (2013).

History

The Violence Against Women Act

In June of 1990, then-Senator Joseph Biden introduced the Violence Against Women Act. He explained: “The bill has three broad, but simple, goals: to make streets safer for women; to make homes safer for women; and to protect women’s civil rights.”²³ It was comprehensive—dealing with any kind of gender-based violence, whether homicide, stalking, rape or domestic violence—and it was gender-neutral, recognizing that men, too, could be victims of gender crimes.

Twenty years after its passage, the Violence Against Women Act reflects a larger struggle waged by women to gain equal rights in the 20th century. In 1964, in a landmark but last minute addition to the 1964 Civil Rights bill, our country’s most important civil rights legislation was amended to add “sex discrimination” to its prohibitions—an action some thought was a joke at the time, and the bill’s supporters feared would kill the bill. But by the 1970s, liberals and conservatives alike were working to eliminate sex discrimination from American law. During these years, the Supreme Court affirmed the rights of men and women not to be subject to stereotypes about what is feminine or masculine.²⁴ Sex discrimination was not to be tolerated, at least in theory. Women lost the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment, but they did not give up the fight – at work or in school.

However far women had traveled, there were still no federal laws prohibiting what we would today call “violence against women” – *no one even called it “violence against women.”* In the early 1970s, state rape laws were reformed in many ways. Most states eliminated the common law rule that victims had to “resist to the utmost” or raise a “prompt outcry.”²⁵ States began to call into question the so-called Model Penal Code’s rule—taught to every law student in America before the 1980s—recommending that rape complainants should undergo psychiatric examinations.²⁶ Shelters for battered women had cropped up in isolated cities across the country. Protective orders were allowed in some states. But police still watched in their police cars as husbands stood on their wives necks.²⁷

²³ Women and Violence, Hearing Before the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, 101st Cong. 3 (1990) (statement of Sen. Biden).

²⁴ See, e.g., *City of Los Angeles, Dep’t of Water & Power v. Manhart*, 435 U.S. 702, 711 (1978) (holding that unequal pension plan contributions for male and female employees based on actuarial tables reflecting women’s greater life spans violated the sex discrimination prohibitions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act).

²⁵ Jill Elaine Hasday, *Contest and Consent: A Legal History of Marital Rape*, 88 Cal. L. Rev. 1373, 1392-93 (2000); See also Oriana Mazza, *Re-Examining Motions to Compel Psychological Evaluations of Sexual Assault Victims*, 82 St. John’s L. Rev. 763, 766 (2008).

²⁶ Roberta J. O’Neale, *Court Ordered Psychiatric Examination of a Rape Victim in a Criminal Rape Prosecution - Or How Many Times Must a Woman Be Raped*, 18 Santa Clara L. Rev. 119 (1978).

²⁷ *Thurman v. City of Torrington* arose when Tracey Thurman sued her local police department, alleging that officers and the city ignored her repeated pleas to arrest her estranged husband, including: “Approximately 25 minutes after Tracey’s call to the Torrington Police Department and after her stabbing, a single police officer ... arrived on the scene. Upon the arrival of [the officer], Charles Thurman was holding a bloody knife. Charles then dropped the knife and, in the presence of [the officer], kicked

Despite progress in the 1980s, there were still laws on the books that betrayed the remnants of a day when women were the legal property of their husbands. In some states, you could shoot your wife's lover for infidelity and never go to jail (on the theory that the killing was a protection of property—the wife).²⁸ In other states, model laws allowed men to plead to manslaughter, not murder, if their wife “left them” or was seen with another man, under the so-called provocation defense.²⁹ If you were a wife and raped by your husband, it was still the case that there were different rules: in some states, the victim had to resist to the utmost; in other states, the victim had to make a “prompt outcry,” rules that did not apply to other rapes.³⁰ In some states, rape law said it was not an aggravated rape if you were on a date – or what the law called the “voluntary social companion” exemption.³¹

To the extent that federal efforts targeted battering at the time, they had been resisted, even filibustered. In 1980, when the Senate debated the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), members of Congress complained that federal intervention would destroy the family and create a federal family bureaucracy like an OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration). The argument today sounds strange, even oxymoronic, but at the time it was powerful.³² Conservative detractors waged an intense fight against a very small authorization for federal shelter funding. This was the state of the law in 1990 when then-Senator Biden introduced the Violence Against Women Act.

The Violence Against Women Act: 1990-2010

In June 1990, the first hearings were held before the Senate Judiciary Committee. It was difficult testimony to give and difficult testimony to hear. As one rape survivor told the Senate Judiciary Committee: “textbooks may offer definitions of rape,” but those definitions do not comprehend “the trauma experienced by the victim.”³³ Witnesses warned that the justice system mocked their trauma. A slashing victim called the justice system “cruel” for claiming she was the “architect of her own suffering,”³⁴—she should not have been “at the bar at midnight” or worn the “short skirt”; that she “was a prostitute of sorts”; and that the entire slashing incident was a lie.³⁵ At trial,

... Tracey Thurman in the head and ran into the ... residence. Charles returned from within the residence holding [Tracey's son] and dropped the child on his wounded mother. Charles then kicked Tracey in the head a second time. Soon thereafter, [three other officers] arrived on the scene but still permitted Charles Thurman to wander about the crowd and to continue to threaten Tracey.”
Thurman v. City of Torrington, 595 F. Supp. 1521, 1525-26 (D. Conn. 1984).

²⁸ See Lawrence M. Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* 221-22 (1993); see also Kaplan et al., *supra* note 55, at 427-31; Laurie J. Taylor, Comment, *Provoked Reason in Men and Women: Heat-of-Passion Manslaughter and Imperfect Self-Defense*, 33 *UCLA L. Rev.* 1679, 1694-95 (1986).

²⁹ *State v. Wille*, 858 P.2d 128, 130-1 (Or. 1993); *State v. Utz*, 513 A.2d 1191, 1192-94 (Conn. 1986).

³⁰ Jill Elaine Hasday, *Contest and Consent: A Legal History of Marital Rape*, 88 *Cal. L. Rev.* 1373, 1392-93 (2000).

³¹ See, e.g., Susan Purcell, *The Evolution of Delaware Sex Crimes Legislation in the 1990s*, 19-*Sum Del. Law.* 8, 10 (2001).

³² 126 *Cong. Rec.* 24120-24 (1980) (statements of Senator Helms, Kassebaum, and Hatch).

³³ *Women and Violence*, Hearing Before the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, 101st Cong. 23 (1990) (statement of Nancy Ziegenmeyer).

³⁴ *Id.* at 27 (statement of Marla Hanson) (June 20, 1990).

³⁵ *Id.* at 30.

questioning about her clothing lasted for twenty minutes and details of her sexual life were revealed—even though this was not a rape case.³⁶

On that day in June of 1990, no one could predict whether the topic would yield the same resistance encountered in the 1980s battle for FVPSA. Would VAWA’s opponents claim the bill was an attack on the family, that funding shelters would create “indoctrination” centers, an OSHA for domestic violence?³⁷ When VAWA was introduced in 1990, the bill had little support from outside groups, whether women’s groups or civil rights groups. One group claimed the bill would violate the First Amendment, another that its rape penalties were too high, and still another that it would detract from efforts to pass legislation addressing other more important women’s issues. One representative of a major civil rights group told the Chief Counsel of the Judiciary Committee that the problem was a “fad.”

Those on the ground, who experienced the violence, who worked with survivors and their advocates, would ultimately come to sound the call for change. On a trip to Rhode Island, then-Senator Biden was invited to give a speech on VAWA at the State House by the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. As one woman later explained the extraordinary impact of the visit: “Here was a prominent US Senator saying the things we had long wanted to hear and that we all believed. He made us feel like this actually might happen, that this bill might pass.”³⁸

Empowered by grassroots support for the bill, then-Senator Biden held more hearings. There were hearings in the Senate on legal questions, hearings in the House on the House version of the bill introduced by then-Representative Boxer, field hearings where other Senators on the committee heard from survivors and battered women’s shelters.³⁹ As women spoke, minds began to change. And, as minds began to change, the Senate Judiciary Committee found itself creating report after report detailing what so few seemed to have understood.⁴⁰ Congress was on the road to creating what would become a “voluminous” record,⁴¹ not only of the scale of the violence but also the depth of ignorance and stereotype surrounding it.

Passing VAWA was not easy. There were only two women in the Senate when it was introduced; after the bruising battles of an earlier day, some civil rights groups and women’s groups were distrustful. Following the great principle of VAWA, which is to build trust among those who distrust, then-Senator Biden brought women leaders together. Ultimately with the leadership of wise women in the field, the tide would begin to turn; the objections from inside Washington

³⁶ Id. at 32.

³⁷ 126 Cong. Rec. 22797, 24124 (1980) (statements of Sens. Humphrey and Hatch).

³⁸ Conversation between Lynn Rosenthal and Deb DeDeBare whose recollection places the date before 1992.

³⁹ National Immigrant Women’s Advocacy Project, Legislative History, Congressional Hearings, Reports to Congress, and Other Reports: VAWA, <http://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/reference/additional-materials/vawa-legislative-history/violence-against-women-act-hearings-and-reports>.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Majority Staff of the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, 102nd Cong., Violence Against Women: The Increase of Rape in America (Comm. Print 1990); Majority Staff of the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, Violence Against Women: A Week in the Life of America, S. Rep. 102-118 (1992); Majority Staff of the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, 103rd Cong., The Response to Rape: Detours on the Road to Equal Justice (Comm. Print 1993).

⁴¹ United States v. Morrison, 529 U.S. 598, 619-620 (2000)

would begin to disappear. Soon, led by the NOW Legal Defense Fund (now Legal Momentum), a coalition was brought together of grassroots providers, shelters, religious organizations, survivors, mental health providers, prosecutors, and victims' rights advocates.⁴²

The battle, however, was far from over. A new source of opposition emerged: the organized federal and state judiciary. From the start, the legislation was opposed by the Department of Justice under President George Herbert Walker Bush. Then, the fight turned to the judiciary. In his 1991 State of the Judiciary speech, Chief Justice Rehnquist publicly blasted VAWA, calling its criminal provisions “open-ended,” and its civil rights provision “so sweeping,” that it would “involve the federal courts in a whole host of domestic relations disputes.”⁴³ This was not a new claim. States' rights had been heard in the fight against FVPSA, and Justice Rehnquist invoked then by Senators for the proposition that shelter funding would force the federal government “into . . . resolving ordinary family disputes.”⁴⁴

Women stood up to the judges. The coalition of grassroots groups stood up. The National Association of Women Judges stood up, issuing a resolution opposing the federal judiciary's position.⁴⁵ (Of course, women judges at the time were a small minority of the federal and state bench.) In 1992, the legal objections intensified: some federal judges urged a committee of the American Bar Association to declare itself against the bill.⁴⁶ Had America's lawyers rejected it, there is little question that VAWA would have died. Women stood up. Brave women, women judges, prominent women lawyers, and they won.

When some members of the House and Senate urged then-Senator Biden to cut the controversial civil rights remedy from the bill, he refused. When asked at a House hearing about the Chief Justice's objections to the remedy, then-Senator Biden and his cosponsor, then-Representative Boxer, asked the committee to consider the legal objections carefully.⁴⁷ What did it mean, after all, for the judiciary to say that the law would bring cases of divorce and custody into federal court?⁴⁸ What the charge assumed was that women would lie—that they would lie about violence to gain child custody or a higher divorce settlement.

Finally, in the middle of the night in a debate on the 1994 crime bill, then-Senator Biden met with the leaders of the Senate. He asked for two things: major new funding for community policing and VAWA—all of VAWA including its civil rights remedy. In return, he promised to reduce the federal workforce by two percent to pay for the new money authorized. Somewhere near midnight,

⁴² Fred Strebeigh, *Equal: Women Reshape American Law*, 346-351 (2009).

⁴³ William H. Rehnquist, Chief Justice of the United States, 1991 Year-End Report on the Federal Judiciary, reprinted at 138 Cong. Rec. 581, 583 (1992) (inserted in the record by Sen. Pryor).

⁴⁴ 126 Cong. Rec. 24120 (1980) (statement of Sen. Helms).

⁴⁵ Strebeigh, at 396.

⁴⁶ Strebeigh, at 389.

⁴⁷ Violence Against Women: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Crime and Criminal Justice of the H. Comm. on the Judiciary, 102nd Cong. 7-14 (1992).

⁴⁸ Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Pub. L. No. 103-322, 108 Stat. 1796, § 40302(e)(4) (noting that nothing in the law was to confer federal jurisdiction “over any State law claim seeking the establishment of a divorce, alimony, equitable distribution of marital property, or child custody decree”).

the deal was sealed, and VAWA passed the Senate. Even then, there were doubters. At conference, some House members urged that the civil rights remedy be cut—after all, said this member, there were no “feminists” in the room. The civil rights remedy stayed.

The year after VAWA was passed, signs emerged that the civil rights remedy was in trouble. Although most lower federal courts were upholding the remedy, the Supreme Court would decide a case that, for the first time in 60 years, would strike a law based on the commerce clause, one of VAWA’s constitutional bases.⁴⁹ When the civil rights remedy was drafted, it relied upon existing constitutional law.⁵⁰ The Supreme Court had now changed the law. That same year, 1995, Christy Brzonkala filed suit against her attackers under VAWA’s civil rights remedy, arguing that a campus rape had forced her to drop out of college. She alleged that one said they “like to get girls drunk and ...”⁵¹

In 2000, Chief Justice Rehnquist would pen the majority opinion in *United States v. Morrison*, striking down VAWA’s civil rights remedy. Justice Rehnquist said that Christy Brzonkala had no VAWA remedy, even while acknowledging that no civilized nation should cognize such crimes. Women had no right to federal protection, said the majority, their recourse was to the states. He acknowledged that Congress had developed a “voluminous” record of state failure to protect women but explained that the remedy’s rationale would allow Congress to regulate “family law and other areas of traditional state regulation,” even “marriage, divorce, and childrearing.”⁵² Justice Souter, in dissent, called the decision a “tragedy”⁵³ that the court would come to regret. To VAWA’s supporters, however, it appeared that the judges had won in the Supreme Court what they had lost in Congress.

The decision was a setback but not a defeat. The vast bulk of VAWA remained intact—its provisions on education and prevention, its special victims units for prosecutors and police, its training of judges. Now, the “hard part” was making the law “*work for women in America.*”⁵⁴ Then-Senator Biden resolved to push even harder to address the problem; to inject civil rights into the system through education and prevention, even if not by law. Over the next 15 years, he would twice seek VAWA’s reauthorization as evidence flooded in that VAWA was working, saving American lives and money.⁵⁵

At first, the effort was easy; in 2000 and 2005, reauthorizations met with increasing bipartisan support. In 2011, however, the law would lapse. For the first time since its 1994 passage, partisan

⁴⁹ *United States v. Lopez*, 514 U.S. 549 (1995).

⁵⁰ Constitutionalists testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee confirmed the constitutionality of the remedy. S. Rep. No. 103-138, at 39 (1993).

⁵¹ *Brzonkala v. Virginia Polytechnic and State University*, 935 F. Supp. 779, 782 (W.D.V.A. 1996).

⁵² *Morrison*, 529 U.S. at 599, 620 (2000); but see the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Pub. L. No. 103-322, 108 Stat. 1796, § 40302(e)(4) (quoted above).

⁵³ *Morrison*, 529 U.S. at 641.

⁵⁴ Implementation of the Violence Against Women Act, Hearing Before the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, 103rd Cong. 1 (1994).

⁵⁵ Kathryn Anderson Clark, et al., A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, 8 *Violence Against Women* 417 (2002) (amended to \$12.6 billion in Erratum, 9 *Violence Against Women* 136 (2003)); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States* (2003).

bickering would stall VAWA. But, by then, Senator Biden had become Vice President of the United States.

The Violence Against Women Act: 2010-Today

While Congress allowed the law to lapse, Vice President Biden renewed his efforts. He named the first White House Advisor on Violence Against Women. He convened an interagency working group made of up of more than 20 agencies, including the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Treasury, and Health and Human Services to address the social and health impact of this violence. As a result of this effort, President Obama announced 15 new action steps across the federal government to reduce domestic violence and sexual assault, including new rules on housing discrimination, pilot projects to increase access to legal services, and the first-ever White House roundtable on sexual assault hosted by the Vice President and the White House Council on Women and Girls.

In 2011, after reviewing data showing that risk to young women of sexual assault remained the highest of any age group, the Vice President used the bully pulpit of the White House to develop the “**1 is 2 Many Campaign**” working with educators, parents, researchers and college students to raise awareness on dating violence and sexual assault. In January 2012, the Justice Department modernized the definition of rape in the Uniform Crime Report to better reflect the scope of this crime.⁵⁶ In April 2012, President Obama directed federal agencies to develop policies to address the effects of domestic violence in the federal workforce and to assist victims.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, the Vice President worked with the Congress to ensure that VAWA would not die. In 2013, after a lengthy political battle, VAWA was finally reauthorized. The 2013 law solidified consensus that VAWA services were available without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity. It also made important strides in closing federal loopholes that, in effect, made it harder to enforce the law to protect Native American women.

In 2014, the Vice President and the White House Council on Women and Girls issued the first White House report on campus sexual assault, **Not Alone**. This report was a reminder that some of VAWA’s greatest challenges had not been met. In one of the very first VAWA hearings in 1990, a campus survivor had warned of a system that was broken. Much progress had been made but some challenges remained. In particular, evidence shows that rape myths have remained resistant to change.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ In January 2012, The Attorney General announced significant changes to the UCR definition of rape which had not been amended since the 1927 definition “the carnal knowledge of a female, forcibly and against her will” to “the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.” Thus, the new definition included non-forcible rape, oral and anal penetration, rape of males and rape of females by females. Press Release, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Attorney General Eric Holder Announces Revisions to the Uniform Crime Report’s Definition of Rape (January 6, 2012), available at <http://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/attorney-general-eric-holder-announces-revisions-to-the-uniform-crime-reports-definition-of-rape>

⁵⁷ Memorandum Establishing Policies for Addressing Domestic Violence in the Federal Workforce, Daily Comp. Pres. Docs., 2012 DCPD No. 00281.

⁵⁸ Amy Dellinger Page, Judging Women and Defining Crime: Police Officers’ Attitudes Toward Women and Rape, 28 Sociological Spectrum 389 (2008).

Protection and Accountability

A More Effective Justice System Response

Before VAWA, federal law never attempted to use its full potential to reach violence against women. There were no major grant programs specifically focused on violence against women. And, as in many states, the federal criminal law did not give parity to this violence—while the federal law had been used to cover a large range of criminal offenses that elude the states (where interstate travel is concerned), there was no attempt to use this power to target violence against women. Because most crimes remain subject to state jurisdiction, VAWA aimed to inject equal treatment into the state system by providing an “unprecedented” number of programs geared toward helping local law enforcement banish myths about rape and battering.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, at the federal level, it created new offenses for battering, rape, and stalking using federal interstate jurisdiction.

Breaking the Taboo

If there was one thing that we knew in 1990, it was that false, and often sexist, beliefs about this violence distorted our criminal justice system. Was it any wonder that the system had such low reporting rates for rape and domestic violence, when many Americans did not think them crimes at all? In a 1975 national survey, 28% of respondents agreed that slapping a spouse was “necessary,” “normal” or “good.”⁶⁰

Thankfully, over the years, these attitudes have changed. A 2006 study showed that 97% of college students surveyed agreed that for a husband to use physical force to make his wife have sex would constitute intimate partner violence.⁶¹ Today, a majority of men report that they have a family member or friend that they believe has been a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault.⁶² On the other hand, pockets of resistance remain: we know that rape myths and victim-blaming continue to exist in the larger community and in the criminal justice system, both at home and abroad.⁶³

⁵⁹ Lisa M. Seghetti & Jerome P. Bjelopera, Cong. Research Serv., R42499, *The Violence Against Women Act: Overview, Legislation, and Federal Funding* (2012).

⁶⁰ Ursula Dibble & Murray A. Straus, *Some Social Structure Determinants of Inconsistency between Attitudes and Behavior: The Case of Family Violence*, 42 *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 71, 73 (1980).

⁶¹ Erin L. Nabors, et al., *Domestic Violence Beliefs and Perceptions Among College Students*, 21 *Violence and Victims* 779, 786 (2006).

⁶² Family Violence Prevention Fund & Verizon Wireless, *Most Men Willing to Get Involved in Efforts to Prevent Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault*, <http://www.verizonwireless.com/news/article/2007/06/pr2007-06-07.html> (2007).

⁶³ The White House Council on Women and Girls, *Rape and Sexual Assault: A Renewed Call to Action*, 16 (2014), available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/sexual_assault_report_1-21-14.pdf; Jennifer Temkin, “And Always Keep a Hold of Nurse, For Fear of Finding Something Worse”: Challenging Rape Myths in the Courtroom, 13 *New Crim. L. Rev.* 710, 715, 719 (2010) (Noting that many of the rape myths are not only false but should have no bearing on criminal liability).

Asking the Right Questions: Creating a Federal Institution

When VAWA was first drafted, it was difficult to get a sense of the scope of the problem—data was conflicting if non-existent. After VAWA was passed, then-Senator Biden pushed to create an Office on Violence Against Women within the Department of Justice⁶⁴ to ensure that there was an institution devoted to this problem embedded within our federal justice system. Over the years, that Office has consistently identified needs and distributed funds to state and local programs, using a smart, targeted approach. In partnership with other agencies, this focus has developed promising practices and yielded several landmark studies, including the 2010 CDC Report on Intimate Partner Violence.⁶⁵

Filling Federal Gaps: Guns

In 1994, gaps existed in federal protections normally granted victims of other serious crimes. It is unlawful for most felons to possess a gun—but these provisions did not necessarily address violence against women.⁶⁶ When VAWA was first passed in 1994, Congress made it a federal crime to possess a firearm or ammunition while subject to a valid permanent protection order for harassing, stalking, or threatening an intimate partner.⁶⁷ A 1996 amendment to the Gun Control Act extended the ban on firearm possession to individuals convicted of a qualifying misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, even if the conviction occurred before the date of the law's enactment.⁶⁸

Equalizing Federal Power

Not surprisingly, when VAWA was first passed, almost every state crime involving interstate elements (from gun crimes to cattle rustling) was covered by the federal criminal code—but not sexual assault and domestic violence. As then-Senator Biden said in 1992, if you can take a cow across state lines and commit a federal felony, then the same treatment was due crimes disproportionately affecting women.⁶⁹

The original VAWA thus extended federal power to treat domestic violence and sexual assault similar to other federal crimes. For example, the first federal prosecution under these laws involved a husband who severely beat his wife. For five days, he drove her in and out of West Virginia before taking her to a hospital in Kentucky. The Fourth Circuit upheld the law as within traditional federal criminal jurisdiction.⁷⁰ This set a decisive precedent that combatting violence

⁶⁴ Leading the Fight: The Violence Against Women Office, Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Crime and Drugs of the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, 107th Cong. 4 (2002) (“A strong, independent Violence Against Women Office should lead the fight with a voice that has credibility, a very high profile, and an ear to the Attorney General himself, not just to cut checks.”).

⁶⁵ Matthew J. Breiding, et al., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Intimate Partner Violence in the United States — 2010 (2014).

⁶⁶ See 142 Cong. Rec. 26674 (1996) (statement of Sen. Lautenberg).

⁶⁷ 18 U.S.C. §922(d)(8) and 18 U.S.C. §922(g)(8).

⁶⁸ Law enforcement officers, military personnel, and other government officials are allowed to retain their government-issued duty weapons when a protection order is issued against them, but this exemption does not extend to a misdemeanor conviction for domestic violence. 18 U.S.C. §922(g)(9).

⁶⁹ Violence Against Women: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Crime and Criminal Justice of the H. Comm. on the Judiciary, 102nd Cong. 8 (1992).

⁷⁰ *United States v. Bailey*, 112 F.3d 758 (4th Cir. 1997).

against women is, literally, *the federal government's business*.⁷¹ Since then, there have been hundreds of cases filed and 175 convictions obtained.⁷² In reauthorizing VAWA, Congress has expanded these interstate provisions to cover cyberstalking and crimes committed in federal maritime and territorial jurisdiction.

Working Together: Incentives for Justice Partnerships

One of VAWA's key legal innovations focused on incentivizing cooperation between civic groups otherwise at war. Rather than a stick, the law provided a carrot: if police and prosecutors worked together with advocates, they could receive seed money for their cooperative efforts. The money could be used to train law enforcement or to provide victims assistance and strengthen local nonprofits, but only on condition of cooperative effort. To obtain a grant, a state had to certify that it provided a basic level of legal protections and that it would use the formula grants to coordinate the community's response.⁷³

The coordinated community response model (CCR) is one of the hallmarks of the Violence Against Women Act. Evidence shows that efforts to address violence against women are particularly effective when they are combined and integrated across various disciplines.⁷⁴ Participants in a CCR ideally include law enforcement agencies, advocates, health care providers, and child protection services. CCRs may also work with local businesses and employers, the media, and clergy, and often engage the entire community in efforts to change the social norms and attitudes that contribute to violence against women.⁷⁵ Studies show that these programs have increased both arrests and prosecutions in sexual assault and domestic violence cases.⁷⁶ Along the way, they have helped to defuse myths and inequalities and reduce the effects of violence against women.⁷⁷

Training Programs for Law Enforcement and Court Personnel

On average, VAWA funds help to train over 500,000 law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, victim advocates, and other personnel every year. Ongoing training may help police officers to better understand victim behavior.⁷⁸ For instance, before being trained, many law

⁷¹ Garrine P. Laney, Cong. Research Serv., RL30871, Violence Against Women Act: History and Federal Funding 2-3 (2010).

⁷² Federal Criminal Case Processing Statistics, Bureau of Justice Statistics, available at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/fjsr/>.

⁷³ Office of Violence Against Women, United States Department of Justice, OVW Fiscal Year 2013 STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program 11 (2013).

⁷⁴ Anne P. DePrince, et al., The impact of victim-focused outreach on criminal legal system outcomes following police-reported intimate partner abuse, 18 Violence Against Women 861 (2012); Branda Nowell & Pennie Foster-Fishman, Examining multi-sector community collaboratives as vehicles for building organizational capacity, 48 American Journal of Community Psychology 193, 196-203 (2011).

⁷⁵ Sandra J. Clark, et al., Urban Institute, Coordinated Community Responses to Domestic Violence in Six Communities: Beyond the Justice System (1996).

⁷⁶ Laura F. Salazar, et al., Examining the behavior of a system: An outcome evaluation of a coordinated community response to domestic violence, 22 Journal of Family Violence 631 (2007).

⁷⁷ Doug Wilson & Andrew Klein, An Evaluation of the Rhode Island Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), NCJ 210584 (2009); Stan J. Orchowsky, Evaluation of a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence: The Alexandria Domestic Violence Intervention Project – Final Report, NCJ 179974 (1999).

⁷⁸ Melissa Reuland, et al., United States Department of Justice, Police-Community Partnerships to Address Domestic Violence 25 (2006).

enforcement professionals shared the common misconception that stranger rape is more common than date rape, or that date rape is somehow less traumatic.⁷⁹ Law enforcement or legal system personnel may ask why victims don't "just" leave, even though that might be the most dangerous time for the victim of domestic violence. They may believe, contrary to fact, that all rapes involve physical injury or that most victims make a prompt complaint.⁸⁰

Law enforcement has come to recognize that these myths may imperil lives and encourage offenders. As one former law enforcement officer notes:

"I think sex crimes are extremely unique because of the preconceived ideas, notions, bias that no other crime victim experiences... Imagine the power that sex offenders experience because victims weren't being believed or because they weren't being given the support they needed to participate in the criminal justice system."⁸¹

A national law enforcement report adds: untrained police officers may not be aware that:

"A victim's first contact with law enforcement rarely happens after the first or even the second domestic violence incident," but rather may only occur "after the pattern of abuse is well established and the level of physical injury has become serious."⁸²

Special Prosecution, Policing and Courts

Specialization has proved a powerful tool in improving the criminal justice response to violence against women. VAWA funding supports law enforcement and prosecution units that deal exclusively with domestic violence or sexual assault, and often with remarkable results. Specialized domestic violence police units collect evidence in a much higher percentage of cases than traditional patrol units.⁸³ The evidence collected by specialized units is more likely to be useful for prosecution,⁸⁴ leading to higher rates of prosecution, conviction, and sentencing.⁸⁵ Specialized prosecution units also make a difference: from 2008 to 2012, a study of 50-60 VAWA-

⁷⁹ International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), *Bringing Sexual Assault Offenders to Justice: Realities of Sexual Assault* [video], available at <http://www.theiacp.org/Police-Response-to-Violence-Against-Women>.

⁸⁰ Michelle J. Anderson, *Diminishing the Legal Impact of Negative Social Attitudes Toward Acquaintance Rape*, 4 *New Crim. L. Rev.* 644 (2010).

⁸¹ International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), *Bringing Sexual Assault Offenders to Justice: Realities of Sexual Assault* [video], available at <http://www.theiacp.org/Police-Response-to-Violence-Against-Women>.

⁸² IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center, *Concepts and Issues Paper: Domestic Violence* (2006), available at <http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/DomesticViolencePaper0606.pdf>.

⁸³ Paul C. Friday, et al., *Evaluating the Impact of a Specialized Domestic Violence Police Unit*, NCJ 215916 (2006).

⁸⁴ Meg Townsend, et al., *Law Enforcement Response to Domestic Violence Calls for Service*, NCJ 215915 (2006).

⁸⁵ Annette Jolin, et al., *Beyond Arrest: The Portland, Oregon Domestic Violence Experiment, Final Report*, NCJ 179968 (1999); David Holleran, et al., *Examining Charging Agreement Between Police and Prosecutors in Rape Cases*, 56 *Crime & Delinquency* 385 (2010).

funded prosecutors' offices showed that they accepted for prosecution a remarkable 73% of sexual assault cases.⁸⁶

Evidence suggests that specialization is also important in court systems. Domestic violence courts process cases more efficiently, increase offender compliance, impose enhanced penalties, improve outcomes for victims, and achieve higher rates of conviction.⁸⁷ One study found that 75% of victims said they would be more likely to report future violence if a domestic violence court were available to them.⁸⁸

Intimate Partner Homicide Reduction

Tragically, intimate partner violence can escalate and lead to death. Although the rate of intimate partner homicides has decreased since the passage of VAWA, there is a long way to go before we reach zero. In one hopeful development, some communities are adopting methods to predict which abusers pose the greatest threats.⁸⁹ After applying one lethality assessment tool, Maryland witnessed a 34% drop in intimate partner homicides.⁹⁰ Inspired by the tragic domestic violence homicide of a client, Newburyport, Massachusetts created one of the first high risk teams in the country and identified over 100 high risk victims during its first six years of operation from 2005 to 2011.⁹¹ Since the formation of the team, there have been zero domestic violence homicides reported in the community.⁹²

In 2013, Vice President Biden and Attorney General Holder announced VAWA funding for twelve communities to replicate these projects.⁹³ VAWA 2013 took additional steps in this direction, by requiring states to develop goals and activities to reduce domestic violence homicides and integrating homicide reduction into key VAWA grant programs. Jurisdictions in 31 states have begun using lethality assessment tools,⁹⁴ but there is an urgent need to make more progress.⁹⁵

⁸⁶ Muskie School of Public Service, Violence Against Women Act: Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, Summary Data Reports on Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program, available at <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/cdsarrestgraphs.htm>.

⁸⁷ Lauren B. Cattaneo & Lisa A. Goodman, Through the Lens of Therapeutic Jurisprudence: The Relationship Between Empowerment in the Court System and Well-Being for Intimate Partner Violence, 25 *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 481 (2010); Adele Harrell, et al., Urban Institute, The Evaluation of Milwaukee's Judicial Oversight Demonstration, NCJ 215349, 35 (2006); Richard R. Peterson & Jo Dixon, Examining prosecutorial discretion in domestic violence cases, Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Toronto, Canada (2005); Lisa Newmark, et al., Specialized Felony Domestic Violence Court: Lessons on Implementation and Impacts From the Kings County Experience, NCJ 167237 (2001); Robert C. Davis, et al., Increasing Convictions in Domestic Violence Cases: A Field Test in Milwaukee, 22 *Justice System Journal* 61 (2001).

⁸⁸ Smith, A., (February, 2001), Domestic violence laws: The voices of battered women, *Violence and Victims*, 16(1):91-111.

⁸⁹ Jacquelyn C. Campbell, et al., Assessing Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Homicide, 250 *Nat'l Inst. of Just. J.* 14 (2003).

⁹⁰ Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, Annual Report 2012 -2013, available at http://mnadv.org/_mnadvWeb/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/mnadv-annual-report_final-single-pages.pdf.

⁹¹ Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, Making an Impact by Preventing Domestic Violence Homicide, <http://jeannegeigercrisiscenter.org/dvhrtn.html?pg=04>.

⁹² *Id.*

⁹³ Press Release, The White House, Office of the Vice President, Vice President Biden and Attorney General Holder Announce Grants to Help Reduce Domestic Violence Homicides (March 13, 2013), available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/03/13/vice-president-biden-and-attorney-general-holder-announce-grants-help-re>.

⁹⁴ Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, LAP: Nationally, <http://mnadv.org/lethality/lap-nationally/>.

⁹⁵ Violence Policy Center, When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2011 Homicide Data (2013).

Shelter and Support

Increased Access to Essential Victim Services

Although one of VAWA’s landmark achievements has been improving the ability of police and the courts to respond to violence against women, this alone is not sufficient. Without a helping hand, millions of women would still struggle to leave their abusers. Survivors need justice, but also support in moving beyond their traumatic experiences: a safe place to live, counseling, healthcare, and civil legal assistance.

National Hotlines

The original VAWA established the National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH). Since the hotline was created 18 years ago, 3.4 million people have used it to receive help with domestic and dating violence.⁹⁶ Beginning in 2007, the NDVH established the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline and loveisrespect.org, a website with resources for teens and young adults to prevent and end abusive relationships. In 2011, as a result of Vice President Biden’s **1 is 2 Many** campaign, the Helpline was expanded to offer support via live chat and text messages. Now, both hotlines provide these digital services in addition to responding to telephone calls.⁹⁷

Coordinated Services

In 2012, VAWA funded programs helped more than 700,000 survivors and their children.⁹⁸ The VAWA approach has never been to privilege law enforcement over services but to bring these together to produce better survivor-centered outcomes. Studies show, for example, that the coordination encouraged by modest seed money is successful in increasing rates of reporting and prosecution and is also more successful in “encourag[ing] victims to access services.”⁹⁹

Housing Programs and Protections

Finding a safe, affordable place to live is one of the critical obstacles victims face in seeking to leave their abusers. Although domestic violence occurs at all income levels, rates of abuse are higher among women with fewer economic resources.¹⁰⁰ The lack of affordable housing and long waiting lists for assisted housing force many women and their children to choose between abuse at home and life on the streets.¹⁰¹ Domestic violence is among the leading causes of housing

⁹⁶ National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2013 Year-End Review, available at <http://www.thehotline.org/year-end-review-2013/>.

⁹⁷ In 2013 alone, hotline, chat and text services responded to over 200,000 calls, 43,500 chats, and 10,000 text messages. Id.

⁹⁸ Muskie School of Public Service, Violence Against Women Act: Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, Summary Data Reports, available at <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/summaryreports.htm>.

⁹⁹ Christopher Mallios & Jenifer Markowitz, Benefits of a Coordinated Community Response to Sexual Violence, 7 *Aequitas Strategies in Brief* 2 (2011).

¹⁰⁰ Claire Renzetti, Economic Issues and Intimate Partner Violence, in *Sourcebook on Violence Against Women* 171, 173 (Claire Renzetti, Jeffrey Edelson, and Raquel Kennedy Bergen ed., 2011).

¹⁰¹ Charlene K. Baker, et al., Domestic Violence, Housing Instability, and Homelessness: A Review of Housing Policies and Program Practices for Meeting the Needs of Survivors, 15 *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 430, 431 (2010).

instability and homelessness for women and children.¹⁰² One in four homeless women report domestic violence as a reason they are homeless,¹⁰³ and the greater a woman's housing instability the greater her risk--46% of homeless women in one study reported staying in an abusive relationship because they had nowhere else to go.¹⁰⁴

Recognizing this link, in 2003, Congress created transitional housing assistance grants for victims fleeing domestic and sexual violence.¹⁰⁵ This program has a strong track record of helping survivors move to more permanent housing.¹⁰⁶ VAWA 2005 and 2013 reauthorizations included important housing protections to ensure that survivors would not be discriminated against in public or federally-subsidized housing and can also transfer to a different location if threatened with imminent harm.¹⁰⁷

These are important steps forward, but many women still face the terrible choice of staying in a home where they are being abused or having no home at all. More must be done to help survivors find safe, affordable housing.

Healthcare and Medical Assistance

Survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault may need both immediate and long-term medical and mental health care. Sexual assault, physical abuse and stalking can have long-lasting physical and psychological consequences, including post-traumatic stress disorder, withdrawal, depression, anxiety, insomnia, unhealthy diet-related behaviors, substance abuse and other health conditions (traumatic brain injury, sexually transmitted infections, etc.).¹⁰⁸ VAWA 2005 created new funding to help health care providers screen for domestic violence and build linkages with domestic violence programs.¹⁰⁹ Through the Sexual Assault Services Program, VAWA funds rape crisis centers to provide crisis intervention and longer-term therapy to help survivors rebuild their lives.

¹⁰² Charlene K. Baker, et al., Domestic Violence, Housing Instability, and Homelessness: A Review of Housing Policies and Program Practices for Meeting the Needs of Survivors, 15 *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 430, 431 (2010).

¹⁰³ Jana L. Jasinski, et al., The Experience of Violence in the Lives of Homeless Women: A Research Report, NCJ 211976 (2005).

¹⁰⁴ Chiquita Rollins & Kris Billhardt, The SHARE Study [Presentation] (2012), available at <https://multco.us/file/15123/download>.

¹⁰⁵ PROTECT Act of 2003, Pub. L. 108-21.

¹⁰⁶ From 2009 to 2012, 70-80% of victims exited from the transitional housing program to permanent housing and 83-90% stated they now had a lower risk of experiencing violence. Muskie School of Public Service, Violence Against Women Act: Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, Summary Data Reports on the Transitional Housing Program, available at <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/thousinggraphs.htm>.

¹⁰⁷ Victims often face unfair eviction and denial of housing benefits because of the violence and criminal actions of others. Monica McLaughlin, National Network to End Domestic Violence, Housing Needs of Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, and Stalking 2 (2014).

¹⁰⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Intimate Partner Violence: Consequences (2014), available at <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/consequences.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-162, 119 Stat 3024 (2006) (“It is the purpose of this title to improve the health care system’s response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking through the training and education of health care providers, developing comprehensive public health responses to violence against women...”).

VAWA grants have also funded state and local programs to train and hire forensic nurses. Trained nurse examiners provide important health care and support for survivors.¹¹⁰ In some places, the existence of a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program has been the determining factor for whether rape victims receive medical attention.¹¹¹ The 2013 VAWA reauthorization added language promoting SANE programs and requiring that forensic rape exams be provided to victims without any upfront costs. SANE programs have been shown to increase sexual assault prosecutions and convictions by as much as 70%.¹¹²

Legal Assistance

Providing victims with lawyers and legal assistance can be a powerful equalizer in the courts. Legal assistance helps victims file for protection orders, retain custody of their children, and navigate the justice and immigration systems. Evidence suggests that legal services may be one of the principal factors contributing to the decline in domestic violence.¹¹³ The 2000 VAWA reauthorization created a legal assistance program for victims, and this program now serves approximately 70,000 victims each year.¹¹⁴

Services and Justice for Communities of Color and Underserved Populations

For women from underserved racial and ethnic communities, support and justice may seem out of reach. Survivors may distrust or fear police because of their immigration status or find that service providers do not provide the culturally relevant help they need. VAWA addresses these problems by funding culturally specific organizations established within the communities they serve. These organizations can help survivors leverage the many strengths of their religious, ethnic, linguistic, community and cultural traditions.

VAWA 2005 created a new grant program, the “Culturally Specific Services Program,” to develop services driven by community needs. Every six months, these organizations serve approximately 100,000 individuals. But a few targeted programs are not enough; every VAWA program must improve its response to communities of color. VAWA funds national training and technical assistance towards this end.

¹¹⁰ Raquel Kennedy Bergen & Shana L. Maier, Sexual Assault Services, in Sourcebook on Violence Against Women 227, 232-33 (Claire Renzetti, Jeffrey Edelson, and Raquel Kennedy Bergen ed., 2011).

¹¹¹ Rebecca Campbell, et al., The Effectiveness of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Programs: A Review of Psychological, Medical, Legal, and Community Outcomes, 6 Trauma, Violence & Abuse 313, 320 (2005).

¹¹² Rebecca Campbell, et al., Prosecution of Adult Sexual Assault Cases: A Longitudinal Analysis of the Impact of a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, 18 Violence Against Women 223, 236 (2012); M. Elaine Nugent-Borakove et al., Testing the Efficacy of SANE/SART Programs: Do They Make a Difference in Sexual Assault Arrest & Prosecution Outcomes?, NCJ 214252, 42 (2006).

¹¹³ Laura Dugan, et. al., Do domestic violence services save lives?, 250 Nat'l Inst. of Just. J. 20, 24; Amy Farmer and Jill Tiefenthaler, Explaining the Recent Decline in Domestic Violence, 21 Contemp. Econ. Pol'y 158, 167 (2003).

¹¹⁴ Muskie School of Public Service, Violence Against Women Act: Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, Summary Data Reports, available at <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/summaryreports.htm>.

Children, Youth Services, and Prevention

As many as 15 million children are exposed to intimate partner violence every year,¹¹⁵ and one-half to two-thirds of residents in domestic violence shelters and transitional housing facilities are children—nearly 20,000 of them on a given day nationwide.¹¹⁶ VAWA funds training for professionals and services to help children and youth overcome the effects of exposure to violence. In 2005, Congress authorized four new youth and prevention-focused grant programs to increase resources, services and advocacy to help children and young people exposed to violence and to support prevention programming.¹¹⁷

Rural Programs

Survivors living in rural communities and remote areas face unique challenges. Public transportation, public housing, and other services may be minimal.¹¹⁸ Responding to these difficult circumstances, VAWA's Rural Grants program has led to the development of outreach services, task forces, and councils, and an improved understanding of how to combat violence against women in rural areas.¹¹⁹ In the most recently reported six month period, VAWA Rural Program grantees provided direct services to over 14,000 victims/survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and child sexual assault and sponsored more than 2,800 education events, reaching more than 100,000 community members, parents, and students of all ages.¹²⁰

Services for Elderly and Disabled Victims

Elderly and disabled victims are particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, as they are often dependent on caretakers and face many barriers to reporting abuse and seeking services. Studies suggest that women with disabilities are approximately 40% more likely to experience physical and sexual violence.¹²¹ Violence and abuse suffered by women with disabilities and Deaf women may be more severe, of longer duration, inflicted by multiple perpetrators, and occur in settings atypical for other victims (e.g., group homes, hospitals, and institutions).¹²² Women with disabilities and Deaf women frequently have greater challenges than other victims accessing the

¹¹⁵ Renee McDonald, et al., Estimating the Number of American Children Living in Partner-Violent Families, 20 *Journal of Family Psychology* 137 (2006).

¹¹⁶ National Network to End Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence Counts 2012: A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services* (2013), available at http://nnedv.org/downloads/Census/DVCounts2012/DVCounts12_NatlReport_Color.pdf.

¹¹⁷ Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-162, §§ 303 and 401. In 2013, Congress re-authorized funding for these purposes but consolidated the four grant programs into two. Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4, §§ 302 and 402.

¹¹⁸ Rural Assistance Center, *Domestic Violence Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.raconline.org/topics/domestic-violence/faqs>; National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, *Rural Victims of Violence* (2007), <http://ncadv.org/files/RuralVictims.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ Campaign for Funding to End Domestic and Sexual Violence, *FY 2013 Appropriations Briefing Book 14* (2012), available at http://nnedv.org/downloads/Policy/FY_13_Briefing_Book.pdf.

¹²⁰ Muskie School of Public Service, *Violence Against Women Act: Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, Summary Data Reports*, available at <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/summaryreports.htm>.

¹²¹ D.A. Brownridge, Partner violence against women with disabilities, *Violence Against Women*, 12(9), 805–822 (2006).

¹²² N. Nosek & R. Hughes, *Violence against women with disabilities, Fact sheet #1: Findings from Studies 1992-2002*. Baylor College of Medicine, Center for Research on Women with Disabilities. Available at <http://www.bcm.edu/crowd/index.cfm?pmid=1409#pers> (2006).

legal system, advocacy, services, and community.¹²³ Older victims of intimate partner violence are often overlooked. For instance, in one study, only three percent of older women indicated their healthcare provider had ever asked them about physical or sexual violence.¹²⁴

Since the 2000 VAWA reauthorization, funding has been available to states and localities to address the special challenges posed by these vulnerabilities. These grant programs support a team approach: law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, victim services, and elder and disability service providers work together to recognize abuse, support victims, and bring perpetrators to justice. While this specialized grant program has been critical in developing these services, the next step is to ensure that all providers offer accessible services and understand the needs of older victims and individuals with disabilities.

Expanding Support and Protection

VAWA in the 21st Century

Each time that VAWA has been reauthorized, Congress has expanded the law to reach more people who have experienced violence. In doing so, our political system has continually affirmed VAWA's core commitment that in our society, every victim of intimate partner violence, sexual assault or stalking, no matter who they are or where they are, should have somewhere to turn. We know, for example, that men as well as women are victims of sexual assault; indeed, rape of boys and young men takes a terrible toll on its victims, and men may be more hesitant to report than women.¹²⁵

Protecting Immigrant Survivors

From the beginning, VAWA recognized that immigration status can become a powerful tool of control in the hands of an abusive partner. Immigrant victims may be dependent upon their partner's status in order to remain in the country or may fear that contacting law enforcement will lead to deportation. Abusive partners often hold the threat of deportation or loss of immigration status over the victim's head as a tool of abuse.

To alleviate this, VAWA created a self-petition process which allows victim spouses of US citizens to apply for lawful permanent residence status for themselves and their children. While their applications are being processed, victims can remain in the country and apply for a temporary work authorization. The 2000 VAWA reauthorization expanded the immigration provisions to reach more victims by creating the U visa. Those whose abusers are not U.S. citizens or lawful

¹²³ Id

¹²⁴ A. Bonomi, M. Anderson, R. Reid, D. Carrell, P. Fishman, F. Rivara, & R. Thompson, Intimate partner violence in older women. *The Gerontologist*, 47(1), 34–41 (2007).

¹²⁵ Matthew J. Breiding, et al., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Intimate Partner Violence in the United States — 2010, 57-58, 61-63 (2014).

permanent residents can apply for a U visa if they have been the victim of a crime and assisted the authorities regarding that crime (e.g. providing assistance to law enforcement or prosecutors' offices). A U visa provides qualified victims and their children with temporary legal status and work authorization, as well as possibly the option of applying for lawful permanent residence status in the future.

Similarly, victims of trafficking may seek a T visa through the 2000 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA). These provisions allow immigrant victims of crime to emerge from the shadows and report what has happened to them, with greater security and opportunity for their futures.

VAWA and the TVPA have been “pivotal in the struggle to end violence against immigrant women.”¹²⁶ VAWA self-petitions have nearly quadrupled since 1997, from about 2,500 to more than 9,200,¹²⁷ and U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services has approved the statutory maximum 10,000 petitions for U visas for five years in a row.¹²⁸

Extending Supports to the LGBT Community

LGBT individuals experience domestic violence at roughly the same rate as the general population. However, LGBT survivors may have different vulnerabilities to abuse¹²⁹ and face greater barriers to accessing services. According to a 2010 survey by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, only 3% of LGBT survivors sought protection orders and just 5% sought access to shelters.¹³⁰ The low rate of help-seeking by LGBT survivors is not surprising: homophobia, hostility towards transgender individuals, and lack of awareness about victimization within the community all play a role. In addition, the needs of LGBT victims have often been overlooked by law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, and victim service providers. Regrettably, it is still the case that not all states ensure the availability of civil protection orders to LGBT victims.

The debate over the 2013 reauthorization of VAWA raised awareness that violence also occurs in LGBT relationships, and Congress specifically recognized LGBT survivors as an underserved population. LGBT-specific services are now included in the authorized purposes for STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant funds. Importantly, the 2013 VAWA reauthorization also prohibited recipients of VAWA funds from discriminating against LGBT victims, reflecting Congress's judgment that victims should never be denied life-saving services on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This was a significant victory not only for LGBT victims but also for the federal recognition of “gender identity.”

¹²⁶ Roberta Villalon, *Violence Against Latina Immigrants: Citizenship, Inequality, and Community* 35-36 (2010).

¹²⁷ William A. Kandel, Cong. Research Serv., R42477, *Immigration Provisions of the Violence Against Women Act 4-5* (2012).

¹²⁸ Press Release, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *USCIS Approves 10,000 U Visas for 5th Straight Fiscal Year* (Dec. 11, 2013), available at <http://www.uscis.gov/news/alerts/uscis-approves-10000-u-visas-5th-straight-fiscal-year>.

¹²⁹ Chandra L. Ford, et al., *Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Services and Resources in Los Angeles: Issues, Needs, and Challenges for Assisting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Clients*, 14 *Health Promotion Practice* 841, 842 (2013).

¹³⁰ National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Intimate Partner Violence in the United States in 2010 27-28* (2011), available at <http://www.avp.org/storage/documents/2011ipvreportfull2010data.pdf>.

Reducing Intimate Partner Violence in Native American Communities

In general, Native Americans are the victims of violent crimes at a higher rate than the rest of the population,¹³¹ and intimate partner violence is no exception. Vast numbers of Indian women have been subjected to intimate partner violence, including rape, physical violence and stalking.¹³² Shockingly, the homicide rate against Native women in some counties comprised primarily of tribal land has reached more than ten times the national average.¹³³

Through VAWA, Congress has made repeated efforts to improve victim services and reduce violence in Native American communities, beginning in 1994 with a grant program dedicated to this problem.¹³⁴ By 2012, however, unique challenges remained. From 1978 to 2013, tribes only had criminal jurisdiction over crimes involving Indian perpetrators, because of the Supreme Court's decision in *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*.¹³⁵ This situation left large numbers of domestic violence crimes unprosecuted as many non-Indians live on tribal lands. The 2013 VAWA reauthorization restored tribes' authority to preside over cases involving non-Indian perpetrators and Indian victims on tribal land in cases involving domestic violence, dating violence, and violations of protection orders. "What we have done, I think, has been game-changing," Attorney General Eric Holder stated following the passage of the law: "we're really only at the beginning stages of reversing what is a horrible situation."¹³⁶

Addressing Sexual Assault on College Campuses

The recent public attention surrounding sexual assault on college campuses has brought to light, once more, an issue plaguing our higher education system for decades. Studies show that about one in five women is a survivor of attempted or completed sexual violence while in college.¹³⁷ Reporting rates are also particularly low, reflecting victims' concern for their privacy and belief that they will be blamed for the assault; their expectation that college disciplinary processes will not punish offenders or treat victims with sensitivity; and their fear of retaliation.¹³⁸

Since the passage of the original VAWA, the federal government has taken steps to address the problem. VAWA established the Safe Campuses for Women grant program to assist colleges and universities in preventing and responding to sexual assault. The National Institute of Justice issued and funded important reports on the prevalence of violence against women on college campuses, the responses of colleges and universities to the problem, and the effectiveness of campus sexual

¹³¹ Jennifer Truman Ph.D., et al., Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Victimization, 2012, NCJ 243389, 7 (2013).

¹³² Matthew J. Breiding, et al., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Intimate Partner Violence in the United States — 2010, 27-28 (2014).

¹³³ Ronet Bachman, et al., Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and the Criminal Justice Response: What is Known, NCJ 223691, 5, 18-26 (2008).

¹³⁴ United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal Communities, <http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/tribal.html>.

¹³⁵ 435 U.S. 191 (1978).

¹³⁶ Sari Horowitz, New Law Offers Protection to Abused Native American Women, Wash. Post, Feb. 8, 2014.

¹³⁷ Christopher P. Krebs, et al., The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study, NCJ 221153, 5-3 (2007).

¹³⁸ See Dean G. Kilpatrick, et al., Drug-Facilitated, Incapacitated and Forcible-Rape: A National Study, NCJ 219181, 2-3 (2007).

assault prevention programs.¹³⁹ In VAWA 2013, Congress returned to the problem and ultimately passed amendments to the Jeanne Clery Act mandates; which among other things, included that schools' policies address primary prevention and awareness programs, and encourage prompt, fair and impartial investigations and resolutions.¹⁴⁰ In addition, schools must provide victims of these crimes with a written explanation of their rights and options and include information about the resources available to victims in their annual report.

In January 2014, the President established the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, co-chaired by the Office of the Vice President and the White House Council on Women and Girls.¹⁴¹ Among other steps, the Task Force has offered best practices on how to conduct sexual assault “climate surveys,” emphasized promising bystander intervention strategies, recommended reporting and confidentiality policies, issued guidance about schools' legal obligations, and suggested specialized training for school officials on how sexual assault occurs and common reactions of victims. Finally, it sought to improve government transparency by maintaining a dedicated website – www.NotAlone.gov – to make enforcement data public and to make other resources accessible to students and schools. The Task Force will continue to develop and promote best practices and new enforcement tools to combat campus sexual assault.

The International Front

For President Obama and Vice President Biden, the mission to eradicate violence against women has always extended beyond our shores. An estimated one in three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime.¹⁴² Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence experienced by women globally.¹⁴³ Other forms of violence include human trafficking, sexual violence—including as a tactic of war—and harmful traditional practices, such as early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, and “honor” killings.

In response to this epidemic of violence against women, then-Senator Biden introduced the International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) in 2007. IVAWA would have promoted legal protections and increased awareness of violence against women around the globe. But, as with VAWA in the beginning, the bill created controversy, stalled in Congress and has languished ever since.

¹³⁹ Fisher et al., United States Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice & Bureau of Justice Statistics, *The Sexual Victimization of College Women* (2000); Christopher P. Krebs, et al., *The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study*, NCJ 221153, 2-1 (2007); United States Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, *Sexual Assault on Campus: What Colleges and Universities are Doing About It* (2005); Morrison et al., *An Evidence-Based Review of Sexual Assault Preventive Intervention Programs*, NCJ 207262 (2004).

¹⁴⁰ Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4, 127 Stat. 90-92.

¹⁴¹ Memorandum Establishing a White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault, Daily Comp. Pres. Docs., 2014 DCPD No. 00043.

¹⁴² World Health Org., *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence* (2013), available at http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf.

¹⁴³ U.N. Secretary-General, *In-depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women: Rep. of the Secretary-General*, U.N. Doc. A/61/122/Add.1 (July 6, 2006).

Meanwhile, the Administration has taken action. In 2009, President Obama named Melanne Verveer the first Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues. On August 10, 2012, President Obama issued an Executive Order on Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls Globally to further enhance the Administration’s efforts to advance the rights and status of women and girls, to promote gender equality in US foreign policy, and to bring about a world in which all individuals can pursue their aspirations without the threat of violence.¹⁴⁴ In complement to these policies, the U.S. has strengthened its efforts to address gender-based violence, including launching the Safe from the Start initiative to better address the needs of women and girls and other groups in emergencies, and increasing investment through the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief in improving the availability and quality of gender-based violence services.

In spite of this important progress, more is needed. Women around the globe are speaking out about the violence they have experienced. The plight of abused and battered women and girls has been exposed. As Vice President Biden said in 2010, “For every woman who has been beaten in her own home, for the millions of women who have been raped as a weapon of war, for every girl who has been attacked on her way to school, for all of the children -- girls and boys -- who have witnessed this brutality, we must do better.”¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

“Around the world, America is looked at as the citadel of progress.”¹⁴⁶ For America to be a leader, however, it must lead by example. Twenty years ago, VAWA reflected America’s leadership position as it does today. But we must not let our efforts wane here in the United States; the world must continue to see the principles for which we stand. This violence, once so hard to name, is now recognized for the toll it takes on our core values of freedom and equality. When sex is used to demean and degrade, when stereotypes about gender and sexual orientation are enforced by violence, we must call these actions by their rightful name as a violation of a human right and equality.¹⁴⁷ Toward that end, the Vice President aims to inspire a continued national dialogue about sex equality, civil rights, and violence in America.

¹⁴⁴ Exec. Order No. 13623 – Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls Globally, 3 C.F.R. 296 (2012).

¹⁴⁵ The White House, Office of the Vice President, Statement by Vice President Biden on Tomorrow’s Anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (2010), available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/24/statement-vice-president-biden-tomorrows-anniversary-international-day-e>.

¹⁴⁶ Vice President Joe Biden, Remarks at the 2013 Vital Voices Global Leadership Awards (Apr. 2, 2013).

¹⁴⁷ Victim-blaming attitudes remain prevalent throughout the world. See Enrique Gracia, Intimate Partner Violence Against Women and Victim-Blaming Attitudes Among Europeans, 92 Bull. World Health Org. 380 (2014) (“One puzzling finding was the widespread nature of victim-blaming attitudes among European citizens even today.”); see Michelle J. Anderson, Diminishing The Legal Impact of Negative Social Attitudes Toward Acquaintance Rape Victims, 13 New Crim. L. Rev. 644 (2010); Jennifer Temkin, “And Always Keep a Hold of Nurse, For Fear of Finding Something Worse”: Challenging Rape Myths in the Courtroom, 13 New Crim. L. Rev. 710 (2010).

APPENDIX

A Sampling of Programs Supported by the Violence Against Women Act

Although there is still much to do, this anniversary gives us a moment to reflect on the vital, often life-saving work the Violence Against Women Act has inspired and supports. Since its passage 20 years ago, help has come on all fronts: shelters and rape crisis centers have been built; hotlines that started around kitchen tables are answering thousands of calls; dedicated activists, advocates and service providers have more resources; education and prevention programs are changing hearts and minds; police and prosecutors better understand these crimes; and more abusers have been put behind bars.

Here profiled are 131 programs or organizations supported, at least in part, by VAWA grants. These by no means cover the waterfront – VAWA funds thousands of programs nationwide – but they do represent the variety of ideas out there and the devotion and big-heartedness of those who run them. Inclusion in this listing does not signify an endorsement, but is meant to reflect the type of work that’s making a difference. The profiled programs were recommended by experts in the field: state domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions, tribal women’s coalitions, state VAWA grant coordinators, groups that work with prosecutors and police, the Domestic Violence Resource Network, among others.

The programs differ in size, scope, tenure and, no doubt, in effectiveness. But they all evince a spirit of hope and restoration – and all share the fervent belief that we must see this violence for what it is: a crime. Not a misunderstanding, not a private matter, not anyone’s right, or any woman’s fault. And that it’s up to all of us to help end it.

Although many of these programs defy categorization, we’ve roughly grouped them according to VAWA’s central aims: to improve the law enforcement response to domestic, sexual, dating violence and stalking; to get survivors the support they need to reclaim their lives; and to reach, sometimes with culturally and linguistically-specific services, those who might otherwise slip through our fingers. VAWA also makes education and prevention a priority, and those efforts are central to many programs across all categories.

In the pages that follow, we also try to capture some of the voices and stories of survivors who’ve been served by these programs. Their battles are fought against often remarkable odds and unspeakable demons. Their victories are a testament to bravery and perseverance: theirs, mainly, but also that of the heroes who help them. As the Vice President has often said, there’s nothing easy about this work – and the effort is made and progress achieved, often, one survivor at a time.

Improving the Law Enforcement Response

Domestic and sexual violence cases can be challenging to investigate and prosecute. Some survivors are afraid to tell what happened, for fear he'll only hit her harder next time or hurt the children. Many are financially dependent on their abusers, and still others are in a place of such darkness, isolation or shame that, in the words of one, "you don't realize anything ordinary or possible." And then there are the historic misunderstandings and biases in officer and prosecutor responses: the reflexive questions about what she was wearing or drinking; the inability to see why she might not have yelled or be eager to point a finger; the raw doubt, often transparent, that she's even telling the truth. At the time VAWA was passed, it was a common practice in many police departments to respond to a domestic violence call by simply "walking him around the block" to cool things down.

Many, many programs are now doing things differently. In addition to concerted, across-the-board trainings for officers and other professionals in the unique dynamics of these crimes, cities now have specially trained investigators and prosecutors who take on domestic and sexual violence cases that before went unheeded – and who also ensure that the right questions are asked at the scene, that evidence is properly collected (including by Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANES)), and that cases are more effectively presented to juries.

And true to VAWA's vision, many communities have brought together police, prosecutors, service and healthcare providers, victim advocates, and court staff (sometimes even under one roof) to ensure that everyone's on the same page. As noted, these Coordinated Community Response Teams have a proven track record of both getting survivors the support they need -- and (not unrelatedly) increasing the odds of successful prosecutions. Other innovations are also turning the tide:

- A number of prosecutors' offices are using a "vertical" model of prosecution, by which the same investigators and prosecutors stay with a case from beginning to end – which makes them smarter and more invested in a case, and which also means a survivor isn't handed off to an ever-changing set of officers and lawyers.
- Other offices have developed a "rapid response" model – where a survivor's safety is immediately assessed and addressed, a charging decision quickly made, and the case put on an accelerated docket. The idea is to provide swift punishment for offenders, and help survivors move apace in their recovery.
- Many police departments and prosecutors' offices have embraced domestic violence or sexual assault advocates as part of their teams, so survivors have someone at their side, on their side, at every step of the process. Some advocates, as in Riley County, Kansas, accompany police officers on every domestic violence call – around the clock, 365 days a year – ensuring that critical services reach those in need.

- A number of law enforcement agencies are implementing lethality assessments – so officers can identify and help survivors most at risk for repeat, deadly abuse.
- Others, like the Wayne County District Attorney’s Office, are working hard to get untested rape kits off the shelves – and Phoenix, similarly, has a dedicated “cold case” sex crimes team that is also successfully tracking down serial offenders.

Other law enforcement programs show that, sometimes, a small innovation can make a big difference.

- I-CAN! Virginia has developed a free, quick, and easy online program for filling out court forms for a protection order.
- The Delaware Capitol Police’s “Early Warning System” provides at-risk victims with police escorts to and from the courthouse.
- “You Have Options” in Ashland, Oregon, gives survivors a voice in how a case is investigated and when (or whether) a defendant is charged – and has led to a 106% increase in the number of sexual assault reports.
- West Virginia has created a registry of all domestic violence protection orders – so an officer responding to a call can instantly see whether there’s a history of abuse in the home. And in a Glendale, Arizona court, coordinators track down the whereabouts of abusers with outstanding protection orders against them and help officers get the orders served.

Providing Essential Services

Even at its best, the criminal justice system can’t remedy all the harm so many survivors have suffered. Countless VAWA-funded programs lend outstretched hands every day, at every turn: be it shelter, 24-hour hotlines, crisis intervention, counseling (including for children who witness abuse), safety planning, transportation, help finding a job or going back to school, parenting classes, childcare, financial planning – or even a pet sanctuary, so a survivor doesn’t have to leave her best friend behind.

Also, for many survivors, the civil legal system can be as important (and as unwelcoming or daunting) as the criminal system. For once she is brave enough to leave, many legal challenges often lay ahead: getting child custody or support, a divorce, a protection order, a U Visa, or working through a housing, employment, education, or consumer problem. Often, legal representation is the difference between winning and losing a case. A number of VAWA-supported programs help get survivors lawyers, often by tapping into the goodwill of the private bar.

Many programs also have advocates who accompany survivors to medical exams, police interviews, or court proceedings – to help explain what’s going on, advocate on their behalf, or just make sure they don’t feel alone. Many others are working with landlords and housing

authorities to find new housing options, help out with rent, or pay back an abuser’s outstanding utility bills – so a survivor isn’t faced with the impossible choice between staying with an abuser or living on the streets. Still others operate as community advocates and conduits for other vital services, and VAWA money is also bringing effective education and prevention programs to schools, civic organizations, churches, and businesses across the country.

And again, it’s sometimes small gestures or breakthrough insights that can help a survivor turn a crucial corner. Like:

- A project in Madison County, Indiana – where advocates teamed up with a locally-owned gas station chain to provide around-the-clock “safe havens” at the stations’ convenience stores, giving fleeing survivors a place to go at all hours.
- A rape crisis center in North Carolina, which trains bar owners and bartenders about how alcohol is used in sexual assaults. Or the Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault which, in addition to training core professionals in the ways of these crimes, also trains barbers and hair stylists, recognizing that they, too, often serve as survivor confidants.
- The EVE Program in Lansing, Michigan, whose advocates work in the circuit court, screening every request for a protection order to see if domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking is involved – and then sitting down with victims (or potential victims) to talk about their safety.
- Groups, like those in Kansas City and Chicago, which make sure a sexual assault survivor has clean clothes to leave the hospital in, eliminating at least that one indignity.
- A Wilmington-based advocacy program that works in family courthouses throughout Delaware, and which (as one example) had the locks on a survivor’s door changed and got her a new cell phone – so when her abuser tried to get in, his key didn’t work and she had a way to call the police.
- A program in the small town of Hamilton, Montana that taught a survivor how to drive, helped her get a license, and found someone in the community to donate a car – so she didn’t have to spend hours pushing her kids to and from day care in a stroller.
- The Citizen Potawatomi Nation’s House of Hope – which has converted a two-car garage into a clothing closet, where clients can “shop” for free professional attire to wear to job interviews, children’s clothes, diapers, and other necessities.

Reaching Specific Communities

For many survivors, language or cultural barriers prevent them from speaking up, getting help – or even identifying what is happening to them as abuse. A number of VAWA-funded programs are meeting these survivors’ needs with services that are multi-lingual and culturally sensitive and specific. Some focus on undocumented immigrant survivors, who are often easily victimized

because they are afraid to contact the police (and risk deportation) or are financially dependent on their abusers. By helping them attain legal residency in this country, VAWA-funded programs have drawn these survivors out of the shadows. Other programs are doing the same for LGBTQ, homeless, young, male, rural, Native American, elderly or disabled survivors, as well as survivors of color. Still others are working with men and boys to enlist them as ambassadors in the effort to end violence against women. Just a few examples:

- “Promotora” programs in a number of states enlist and train trusted Spanish-speaking members of the community to become advocates and educators, and to act as a bridge to other available services. Promotoras, often themselves survivors, work to establish trust with their sisters – to let them know, among other things, that it’s not ok to be abused – so they’ll come forward, report the violence, and get the help they need.
- A number of tribes include Native American religious services, sweat lodges, or other tribal customs as part of their programs; finding comfort in these practices, or speaking to an advocate in her tribal tongue, often helps a survivor open up about abuse and begin to imagine a way out.

Many programs make it their mission to meet survivors “where they live.” Like:

- The United Somali Women of Maine, who invite small groups of women for talks, and go door-to-door in immigrant neighborhoods to get a sense of whether a woman may be in an abusive relationship. (Often, after a 30-45-minute conversation, a survivor is ready to seek help.)
- “Veterans on Deck” in South Carolina, which uses sailing as a form of therapy for survivors of military sexual assault.
- Voces Latinas in New York, where HIV-infected survivors have forged unconventional partnerships with bars and clubs to reach sex workers, patrons, and street prostitutes.
- A sexual assault counseling center in Illinois, whose advocate drives around very spread-out rural counties, setting up a small meeting place at a local church, seeing kids at school, or opening the doors of a local town office.
- Programs that hold drop-in hours at local high schools, elderly housing facilities, homeless shelters, or malls – so survivors can easily find someone to talk to, rather than having to take the more difficult step of picking up the phone or walking into an advocacy center.

As noted, throughout this collection, we include some stories of survivors helped by these programs. Here, just a few of their voices:

- “I don’t know where I would be today if it wasn’t for this organization. ... I could still be homeless ... honestly, I could be dead. [I have learned] that I am not worth less than anybody else.”
- “I would not have been brave enough to do this myself!”
- “[Without] your services I would never have been able to get a divorce. Now I am free of a bad abusive husband – closure to a lousy life, opening up a new better one.”
- “I was given validation in telling my story. I said this bad thing happened to me and I was believed. For me, that’s justice.”
- “He broke my teeth, head butted me, pulled out my hair, punched me in the face. Once he put me out of our house and I had to sleep out in the bitter cold with my dog. ... Every ounce of me felt humiliated and ashamed. ... Being at the shelter changed everything. ... I am putting my life back together. I found a home where I can have my dog and I got a job. ... I get up every day, hoping.”
- “People will tell you ‘it’s not your fault,’ but deep down you do believe it is your fault. ... I am finding out more about myself and my passions. ... I had no future goals. I only wished to have a safe normal day.”
- “When you are in an abusive relationship, you begin to lose yourself. Your actions no longer become choices that better your life, but a web of unpredictable responses to stay alive. ... I rediscovered hope ... and that changes were possible.”
- “You helped me show my girls that domestic violence is never ok.”
- “I have little money and worried about my safety and my kids. I now don’t worry and am able to exhale the breath I have held for a year.”
- “He never thought I would leave because I had nowhere else to go. Without this program, my children and I would be homeless.”
- “When I was without hope, devastated by my husband, I believed that I was in prison. Before I was afraid to leave him, because I thought nobody would help me with housing, food, children, and my pregnancy. ... I never thought the day would come when I could do something in my life. ... [This program] helped me to believe in myself.”
- “This [education program] is really important because it is like I’m recreated. My perspective changed drastically.”

- “[You] broke me out of isolation – alone wasn’t a big enough word to describe how I was feeling.”
- “If it weren’t for all of you accepting me every time I came back, and not making me feel that I would never break free, I wouldn’t have been able to do it.”
- “I learned what violence is. I didn’t know before. I thought it was normal for my ex to beat me up. ...Thanks to [this program], I am another woman.”
- “I learned that what happened was not my fault.”

And this, spoken over and again:

“Thank you for saving my life.”

Improving the Law Enforcement Response

Alameda County District Attorney's Office: Sexual Assault Unit Alameda, California

www.alcoda.org/about_us/sexual_assault_unit

The Alameda County District Attorney's Office uses VAWA money to fund "vertical" prosecution teams for sexual assault cases: that is, the same lawyer, investigator, and victim-witness advocate stay with the prosecution from beginning to end. This is unusual: typically, lawyers rotate through various stages of the proceedings, from preliminary hearings to trial, so survivors are forced to recount the details of their assault to an ever-changing set of lawyers. A "vertical" model changes that – and also allows survivors to build trust and understanding with their specially trained teams.

The Office's attention to the needs of survivors has also paid off in the courtroom: in the last five years, the percentage of cases that can't be prosecuted because the survivor didn't want to participate dropped markedly: down from 43% to 10% of felony domestic violence cases, and 58% to 12% of misdemeanor cases. Alameda County also leads the state in collecting restitution for crime victims.

The District Attorney has also created the Sexual Assault Mentor Program: seasoned, successful sexual assault prosecutors mentor others in each of California's 58 counties, helping them understand the unique challenges posed by these cases, including how to more sensitively work with survivors.

Canyon County Prosecuting Attorney's Office Caldwell, Idaho

www.canyonco.org/Prosecuting_Attorney

The Canyon County Prosecuting Attorney's Office includes a unit especially devoted to the prosecution of domestic violence crimes. (Another unit also specializes in child abuse and sexual assault.) Prosecutors meet with a domestic violence survivor within 24 hours of any reported incident, which tends to build trust in the process and encourage a survivor's participation. Prosecutors also often sit in on interviews with law enforcement officers, so survivors aren't forced to repeatedly recount the abuse, or miss work, to participate. The cases move through a domestic violence court within 90 days, ending what was once a very slow-moving docket. The head of the unit, Monica Morrison, is also on call at all times to answer any questions from investigators.

This rapid prosecution model is accompanied by "wraparound" services to help ensure a survivor's safety and, hopefully, facilitate her independence. If an abuser controls the family's finances, for instance, victim coordinators help secure housing and other resources. Perpetrators are also required to undergo counseling and treatment (sometimes for alcoholism or mental illness) before

sentencing – and must report on their progress to the sentencing judge. Also, the Office routinely requests forensic interviews of children who witness domestic violence; these accounts often prompt an offender to plead guilty, thus making it unnecessary for a child to take the stand in court.

Canyon County Attorney Bryan Taylor credits this system with the County’s 30% reduction in crime, as well as the Office’s increased conviction rates for domestic violence-related charges. He also credits VAWA funding for helping sustain and bolster the Office’s work – for having seen the benefits, lawmakers have been increasingly persuaded to channel other funds into these programs.

Douglas County Sheriff’s Office **Tuscola, Illinois** www.dcsheriff.net

Since summer 2013, the Douglas County Sheriff’s Office has required deputies to complete a danger assessment every time they respond to a domestic violence call. Developed by Jacquelyn Campbell of Johns Hopkins University, the assessment came to the Office’s attention at a statewide institute on violence against women. In devising the assessment, Dr. Campbell examined reports from some 2000 homicide-by-partner cases and formulated 20 questions to identify predictors of lethality, some obvious, others less so. (For example, a woman with a child from a different partner is at a higher risk of lethal violence). Officers go over the results of the questionnaire with a survivor – the dangerousness of her situation is scored – and are trained to help her see the warning signs; understand that violence can (and often does) escalate quickly; and, when appropriate, encourage her to leave, get help, and even press charges.

Just one story. Last year, the Sheriff’s Office was investigating a jealous husband who effectively controlled all aspects of his wife’s life, deciding who she could see and how much time she could spend outside the house. One evening at dinner, he became angry and threatened to kill her and her child by a previous marriage. After he put a gun to her head, S called a local shelter – and when the police came to the scene, they seized some 52 firearms and 21,000 rounds of ammunition. The Sheriff’s Deputy gave her danger assessment (she scored 28, where anything over 18 is “Extreme Danger”), and also presented it to the judge – who later said the assessment was responsible for his “no bail” ruling. The abuser remains behind bars.

Crisis Center, Inc. **Manhattan, Kansas** www.thecrisiscenterinc.org

In addition to providing core services to survivors in five counties, including a 24-hour hotline, shelter, food, and counseling, the Crisis Center has used VAWA money to bring significant reforms to Riley County, Kansas. All domestic violence cases in Riley County are handled by a specially trained prosecutor at the county (rather than municipal) level, ensuring more consistent

and expert prosecutions, as well as a heightened respect for the perspectives of survivors. The county police department also has two special domestic violence investigators on staff, whose sole job is to investigate these crimes. Perhaps even more importantly, trained community “Police Response Advocates” accompany officers to every domestic violence call: these advocates are available around-the-clock, 365 days a year, and respond to upwards of 600 calls annually. They stay on the scene to talk to a survivor, or follow-up by phone the next day, ensuring that critical services reach those in need. Says Crisis Center Executive Director Judy Davis, the shift in mentality – making domestic violence a community concern rather than a police problem – has made all the difference for Riley County survivors.

Domestic Violence Advocacy Program

Wilmington, Delaware

www.childinc.com

This statewide legal advocacy program is co-located (rent free) in family courts throughout Delaware, making it uniquely accessible to often confused or overwhelmed survivors who walk through the courtroom doors. Its staff and volunteers help compose petitions for protection orders, subpoena witnesses, draw up safety plans, and accompany survivors to court hearings. The program provides other critical help both large and small – like a pro bono lawyer for a child custody or divorce case, as well as bus passes, lock changes, and diapers. Over the last 10 years, the Program has helped some 12,000 survivors file for protection orders, and since 2006, 798 have received other free legal help. The Program has long-standing relationships with Widener Law School and Delaware Volunteer Legal Services, and committed volunteers and student interns are also central to its work.

Just one story. S was referred to the Program by the New Castle police after officers arrested her husband for assault. For the first time, S told the Program’s Spanish-speaking advocate (S speaks no English) about the history of abuse – about how he’d throw her against the door, grab her around the throat, rape her, and often scream at her in a jealous rage. Financially dependent on this violent man, S had been afraid to take any action against him. This time, with an advocate’s help, S was ready to break away: the advocate took pictures of S’s injuries, helped her obtain a protection order, got her a cell phone (the husband had cut off all utilities to the apartment), and arranged for the locks on the apartment to be changed. Several days later, when the husband tried to get in, his key didn’t work and S was able to call the police with her new phone. The husband fled, but was later arrested for violating the protection order.

Further down the road, S pressed ahead with criminal charges, and the pictures taken by the advocate helped convince the husband to plead guilty to the abuse. Advocates also helped S get a divorce and custody of her children – and she’s now living in safety and with hope for a brighter future.

Multnomah County District Attorney's Office Portland, Oregon

www.mcda.us

Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill credits VAWA with creating a “psychological, legal, and monetary” shift that brought domestic violence out of the shadows and “into the sunlight.” Where cases were once rarely charged, in part for lack of dedicated resources, his office now employs six full-time lawyers, legal support staff, and victim advocates specially devoted to domestic violence prosecutions and survivor services. At the Office’s urging, law enforcement also now devotes special teams to domestic violence investigations. The Office works closely with the Gateway Center for Domestic Violence, which provides centralized services for survivors, so they need not cast about the city in search of help. The Office also places a priority on enforcing, and prosecuting violations of, restraining orders issued in its neighboring state of Washington.

The Office has also revamped its deferred sentencing program, which was developed, in part, to accommodate a frequent desire of families to reunite after being hurt by domestic violence. Recognizing that the state’s two-day “anger management seminars” for offenders was inadequate, the Office worked with other public safety partners to develop new programs (eventually codified in state law) that require several months of evidence-based treatment.

The Office has also created a team specifically devoted to human trafficking – and has developed the Sex Buyers Accountability and Diversion Program, which, among other things, funnels fines paid by offenders into victim services and law enforcement. Additional staff have also been hired and trained to work specifically with LGBT and non-English-speaking victims of domestic violence. As D.A. Underhill (who himself is known for his prosecution of domestic violence cases over the years) puts it, VAWA has allowed his Office to take “not steps, but leaps forward” in combatting domestic violence.

Kings County District Attorney's Office Brooklyn, New York

www.brooklynda.org

In partnership with the mayor’s office, the Kings County District Attorney’s Office used VAWA funds to create a Family Justice Center – which puts specially trained domestic violence prosecutors, victim advocates, translators, civil lawyers, counselors (23 organizations in all) under one roof so they can work side-by-side on behalf of a survivor (and all while her children play safely in the next room).

Through its Early Victim Engagement (EVE) project, a survivor can expect to receive real-time information within 24 hours of an arrest about bail, an order of protection, safety planning, and resources available at the Center. The survivor then typically meets with an advocate and the prosecutor, who assess whether she is in continued danger – and, if so, who work to find her safety.

Since these reforms have been implemented – and along with trainings in lethality risk factors – family-related homicide rates have dropped significantly in Brooklyn: down 51% from 37 in 2002 to 18 in 2012, the largest decline of the New York City boroughs.

In addition to this rapid response team, the Office has experts are on call to help with cases of LGBTQ abuse, offers specialized counseling for the Deaf, and provides linguistically and culturally appropriate services for immigrants and other non-English-speaking survivors. Services are available in Creole, Spanish, French, Russian, and Polish, among other languages. The Office is also using “alternative light source” technology to detect marks of strangulation that are often invisible to the naked eye. On the horizon: an effort to update the city’s antiquated 911 system, so calls, now digital, can be easily captured and used as evidence in criminal cases. Also with VAWA funds, the Office leads a collaborative that reaches into isolated communities where survivors are often reluctant to report abuse or access services. Since its inception in 1998, the program has conducted over 1,400 training, education campaigns and faith-based initiatives to let survivors know that they need not suffer in silence.

Reports District Attorney Kenneth Thompson: “Through the implementation of our [VAWA] grant-funded programs, we have been able to provide a staggering array of options and choices tailored to the specific and indeed varied needs of our culturally rich and diverse county.”

I-CAN! Virginia Richmond, Virginia

www.courts.state.va.us/courtadmin/aoc/judpln/programs/afapo/home.html

This free online program helps Virginia survivors of domestic, sexual, teen violence and stalking prepare the court forms needed to obtain a protection order. The program, which takes about 30 minutes to complete, asks a series of questions about a person’s situation, and then incorporates the answers into an official form that can be taken to court and filed. Notably, the form also serves as a way to preserve details of abuse, which a survivor can later use to jog her memory, and which can also strengthen a case in court. The forms are available in English and Spanish, accessible to persons with disabilities, and are also on the Senior Navigator system, a web-based resource for older Virginians.

In May 2014, the program was made available on smart phones and tablets – and three weeks later, use increased by some 24%, primarily by college students and young adults. Madelynn Herman, the Domestic Violence Coordinator with the Virginia Supreme Court, says I-CAN! is an important tool not only for victims, but for the advocates and professionals who help them – and that it wouldn’t be possible without VAWA funding.

The Next to the Jury Box Project Austin, Texas

www.tdcaa.com/journal/next-jury-box

This project brings together district and county attorneys from across Texas to discuss the challenges and innovations in state domestic violence prosecutions. The goal is to help prosecutors think in new and different ways about handling these cases, and to bring them up to date on such issues as the prevalence of family violence in the state (including fatality rates), battering intervention and prevention programs, and how this violence affects military veterans and their intimate partner victims. Among the practices the group has focused on: prioritizing protection orders; obtaining pleas with a finding of family violence (which has important ramifications in later divorce and custody proceedings, and for firearms prohibitions); determining when prosecutions can proceed without a survivor's participation; better and quicker evidence collection; and fostering sensitive working relationships with survivors.

A "Leadership Core" of 10-12 trusted prosecutors meets regularly with the Texas Council on Family Violence to shape the focus of each gathering. And because district and county attorneys are elected officials, the project calls on them to take leadership roles outside the courtroom as well, whether it's to help bolster survivor services, or to set the tone in the law enforcement community, in schools, and in the popular discourse.

City of Glendale Domestic Violence Taskforce Glendale, Arizona

www.glendaleaz.com/court/domesticviolenceinfo.cfm

Judge Elizabeth Finn, presiding judge of the Glendale City Court in Arizona, has worked in the field of domestic violence for over 35 years, and is Chair and founder of the Glendale Domestic Violence Taskforce. Two years after joining the Court in 2003, and with VAWA's help, she started what has evolved into a full domestic violence treatment docket – based on the Drug Court model – that monitors defendants' compliance with counseling. To date, 2,600 participants have graduated from the program. Currently, VAWA funds a judge to hear protection order requests over the lunch hour, thus ensuring all day coverage; a full-time bi-lingual advocate at the Court who helps victims get protection orders and resources; a full-time police department employee to coordinate the service of protection orders in 11 cities; and a second full-time police employee who focuses on high lethality domestic violence cases.

Protection orders in Arizona are not effective until served, and city police can't leave city limits to serve them. The protection order coordinator helps track down abusers, including those in other states, and assists law enforcement in serving the orders. In one case, an abuser was texting his victim from California, saying he would be coming to get her. The coordinator was able to locate him and advise the California county sheriff where the offender was hiding (even though the sheriff had been told he wasn't at that location) – and the order was successfully served. Also with VAWA money, the Glendale Police Department has developed a lethality protocol to identify, and

respond to, high risk domestic violence situations. As part of this effort, non-lethal strangulation is now categorized as a felony, not a misdemeanor.

Prior VAWA money also provided: cell phones for domestic violence detectives and advocates; overtime pay for police officers to serve warrants (which is most often the only way they can be served); and resources for the creation and maintenance of a website collecting protection order information in English and Spanish.

El Paso County District Attorney's Office: the 24-Hour Contact Initiative El Paso, Texas

www.epcounty.com/da

This program aims to move family violence cases efficiently through the criminal justice system and swiftly hold offenders accountable. Within 24 hours of an arrest, an investigator and victim advocate visit a survivor's home; they assess whether she needs help (*e.g.*, whether injuries have been properly treated, whether she and her children need shelter or counseling); give her contact information for services; and gather more evidence. The team operates on an extended schedule, seven days a week. After the home visits, the team meets with the prosecutor – as well as law enforcement officers, the local shelter, a community mental health agency, and the corrections department – to conduct an in-depth review of the case. District Attorney Jaime Esparza then decides what action to take, be it prosecution, battering intervention, counseling, or pre-trial diversion. If a trial is contemplated, the goal is to have the case before a jury within a month.

According to a study by the University of Texas, the home visits provide important emotional and other support to victims, and the project has created a “paradigm shift” in how family violence cases are viewed and prosecuted: the crimes are taken more seriously, evidence is gathered more effectively, local stakeholders work more collaboratively, and prosecutions are more successful. Also, women at the border, both documented and undocumented, have increasingly come forward to report their abuse. One participant in the study said the program has reduced the stigma associated with these crimes: “family violence is no longer a joke in El Paso County.” Said another: “It’s become a respectable complaint, like a civil right.”

Approaching the Bench: A Judicial Summit on Family Violence Austin, Texas

www.tcfv.org/judicial-summit

Every year, some 50 judges who hear domestic violence cases across Texas come together to talk about best practices, exchange ideas about the developing issues in the field, and brainstorm about how to help survivors overcome barriers – like interpreter needs, intimidation and trauma, and economic insecurity – in accessing the civil and criminal justice systems. Convened by the Texas Council on Family Violence, Summit participants have also tackled the volatile combination of domestic violence and guns – and helped develop state firearm surrender protocols, whereby

domestic abusers are forced to relinquish their weapons. This year's Summit will focus on how judges who've made domestic violence cases a priority can ensure their legacy continues upon retirement, and how courts can better handle cases involving veterans.

Wayne County District Attorney's Office Detroit, Michigan

www.waynecounty.com/prosecutor

The specially trained prosecutors in the Wayne County Prosecutor's Special Victims Unit try both domestic violence and sexual assault cases, as well as cases involving elder and child abuse. The domestic violence sub-unit includes four advocates who help survivors navigate the court process – and cases are also assigned to a dedicated domestic violence docket, which keeps them moving and helps judges better monitor an offender's compliance with court orders.

More than half the cases handled by the Office's sexual assault team come from Detroit. According to Robert Spada, Deputy Chief of the Special Victims Unit, that poses unique challenges for prosecutors – such as “a very transient population in terms of unstable housing, the inability to contact the victim by way of telephone, and the lack of transportation to and from court.” In response, the Office works closely with Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs), advocates, and counselors, so it can better reach survivors and help ensure they have the support, among other things, to participate in a criminal case.

In August 2009, an assistant prosecutor discovered a room full of over 11,000 untested rape kits dating back to the 1980s at the Detroit Police Department. Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy made it her mission to have the untested kits tested and investigated – and, for several years beginning in 2010, has worked to secure funding (including VAWA dollars) for the effort. In 2011, the Office received a grant from the National Institute of Justice for a three-year research project, and preliminary results show what can happen when old rape kits are tested: from a sample of 1,600 kits, more than 450 suspected rapists have been identified, at least 127 of whom are believed to be serial offenders. Suspects have been linked to crimes in 23 different states and the District of Columbia. Five serial rapists have been charged, convicted, and are serving lengthy prison sentences. Hundreds of other cases are in varying stages of investigation and prosecution.

As the Office also recognized, testing alone isn't enough; when jurisdictions test large volumes of rape kits, they also need the resources to follow up on the leads – which means having trained detectives, victim advocates, and prosecutors available and working together to successfully pursue the new cases. To that end, the Office has partnered with a number of other organizations and advocates, past and present. “By working as a collaborative in prosecuting these cases and maintaining open lines of communication between all agencies involved,” says Prosecutor Worthy, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office “has been able to provide a victim-centered approach to the prosecution of sexual assault cases, minimizing the trauma to the victim and achieving a successful outcome in the criminal justice system.”

Flagstaff Police Department
Flagstaff, Arizona
www.flagstaff.az.gov

For years, Flagstaff police officers had a hard time serving protection orders granted by the municipal court: defendants were difficult to locate and officers had trouble re-contacting survivor/plaintiffs to tell them either that the order had been served or to solicit their help in finding the defendant. A self-directed audit last year showed that over 60 protection orders hadn't been served, many after several attempts. So the Department introduced a new, simple protocol that's made a significant difference: now, when a protection order is granted, plaintiffs fill out a form describing where a defendant lives, works, or frequents – and also providing a “safe number” where an officer can re-connect. Today, the Department averages only six outstanding orders at any given time – a ten-fold improvement.

Also over the last year, the Department researched and developed additional domestic violence lethality assessment tools. Officers now ask survivors a series of 28 questions that seek to get at a perpetrator's history of violence, and the extent to which he exerts coercive control. The answers are scored and the survivor's safety assessed. Domestic violence detectives and advocates respond to high risk situations immediately – and when a defendant initially appears in court, the assessment is presented to the judge to inform any release decision.

Delaware Capitol Police: Early Warning System
Wilmington, Delaware
www.capitolpd.delaware.gov

About a year and a half ago, a woman was brutally murdered in a Delaware family courthouse. In retrospect, the warning signs were clear: the estranged husband had a history of domestic violence, had been convicted of kidnapping their children, and was fighting payment of back child support. The Delaware Capitol Police, who provide courthouse security statewide, also knew from experience about the safety risks posed by domestic abusers.

Hence was born Delaware's Early Warning System. Headed by a longtime police officer with extensive experience in domestic violence cases, the program provides survivors with police escort to and from the courthouse, either from home, a safe meeting place, or the court parking lot. Domestic violence advocates or survivors can contact the Capitol Police directly to report a risk, and referrals also come from law enforcement. Once a report is made, a domestic violence detective or Early Warning System analyst makes an assessment and coordinates next steps. As of March 2014, over 50 victims had been escorted to their courtroom appointments by Capitol Police officers.

The officer who runs the program, Gary Melvin, also trains police across the state on the Lethality Assessment Protocol – which aims to prevent domestic homicides, serious injury, and re-assault by helping first responders identify the warning signs and encouraging high-risk survivors to seek

shelter or services. Under the protocols, officers in the field enter information about these potentially lethal abusers and their victims into a centralized database, which also feeds into the Early Warning System. Until recently, a number of police departments were not properly reporting the data, and many officers had not received the requisite training. That, however, is changing thanks to the VAWA-funded Early Warning program: in the first three months of 2014, over 255 police officers have been trained on the protocols; each police department (there are about 44 across the state) has received individualized information about its record; and more departments are scheduled for training in the coming months.

Franklin County District Attorney's Office Chambersburg, Pennsylvania

www.franklincountypa.gov/da

Franklin County prosecutes over 100 cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking every year using the “vertical prosecution” model – whereby a case is assigned to the same prosecutor and the same judge from start to finish. Before adopting this system several years ago, cases were constantly reassigned to different lawyers and judges, which meant they didn’t have a chance to really learn a case, and that survivors often had to recount their experiences over and over again. Now, prosecutors develop relationships with survivors – which are further enhanced by the Office’s partnership with Women In Need, a local nonprofit that advocates for a survivor, accompanies her to court, updates her about developments in the case, and is available to answer questions and generally de-mystify the process.

The Office also instituted an “Early Accountability” program, which gives defendants the opportunity to enter guilty pleas at their first court appearance. (Before, plea proceedings generally were scheduled some six to eight weeks later.) Domestic violence cases, according to District Attorney Matt Fogal, are ripe for early resolution: defendants have typically spent time in jail (which makes them more receptive to a plea), and survivors, in his experience, are more inclined to participate in the immediate aftermath of an incident. Plea agreements in Fogal’s Office must account for a survivor’s wishes.

Also with VAWA funding, the Office meets regularly with, and trains, local law enforcement on issues specific to domestic violence; has implemented county-wide investigation protocols, including for strangulation cases; and keeps current with all its trainings, covering such issues as cyber stalking, strangulation, and avoiding dual arrests.

The Office also has a practice of requesting higher bail amounts in domestic and sexual violence cases. “While bail generally is designed to ensure a defendant will appear in court,” says Fogal, “my recommendations also account for community safety and the safety of the victim in particular.” For when a defendant is in jail, a survivor is safe.

You Have Options

Ashland, Oregon

www.carriehull.wix.com

You Have Options is based on the idea that if survivors of sexual assault can control certain aspects of an investigation – like who is contacted and whether an arrest is made – they are more likely to report what happened and participate in a prosecution. And that, in turn, means that offenders are more likely to be caught and held accountable. Formalized in 2012 after several years of research and development, the program is the brainchild of Ashland Police Department Detective Carrie Hull, who saw that concerns unique to sexual assault survivors, like the fear of not being believed or having confidentiality violated, often prompted them either not to report or to find other ways to disengage from the criminal justice system. This dynamic, Hull saw, was compounded by the fact that sex offenders often target vulnerable victims who may appear to lack credibility: abusers know these victims often blame themselves (and hence don't report), or are unlikely to be believed if they do report.

You Have Options gives survivors three reporting avenues: they may give an Information Only Report (which involves no investigation beyond a survivor interview or an inquiry, with her consent, into whether an identified assailant may be a serial perpetrator); they may request a Partial Investigation (which involves some further investigation initiated by law enforcement, and might include the collection of evidence such as a rape kit); or a Complete Investigation (which involves a full inquiry whose goal is a criminal prosecution). Investigators pay particular heed to identifying serial sexual predators via investigative strategies specifically tailored for that purpose.

In addition to the three reporting options, the program requires that officers follow a series of survivor-centered protocols. For example, a survivor need not report in person, but can use an online form or ask an advocate to report for her; survivors may provide as much, or as little, information as they choose, taking time to evaluate their options; officers must help a survivor locate advocacy services; a survivor may be accompanied by an advocate or other support person during all phases of the reporting process and investigation; and officers' interview techniques must be trauma-informed. As a result of this program, the Ashland Police Department has seen a 106% increase in sexual assault reports between January 2009 to December 2013. The program (again, with VAWA dollars) is being developed for national implementation.

A few testimonials from program participants:

- “I wasn't sure in the beginning if I could go to trial but ... now he's in prison. I would never have worked with police without this program. Thank you for changing my mind about cops.”
- “I was given options. I was given validation in telling my story. I said this bad thing happened to me and I was believed. For me that's justice.”

- From a sexual assault nurse examiner: “I know lots of officers that think most reports are false and that the real ones are the ones that don’t get reported. This can be so frustrating and counter-productive. . . . I was happily surprised to see that Ashland is totally different. It’s awesome to see that the entire department . . . aren’t just looking at ‘putting people in jail’ but actually care about getting victims the real help they need even if it means no official report or charges.”

Law Enforcement Training Initiative

Elkview, West Virginia

www.wvcadv.org

In partnership with other members of the criminal justice community, the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence has helped develop advanced, up-to-date training for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and court personnel in the unique dynamics of domestic violence. Trainings cover such topics as victim intimidation, child victimization, updated rules and legal procedures related to these crimes, and human trafficking. Upcoming trainings will cover new protocols for assessing offenders’ dangerousness, and the program also intends to provide every responder with access to a phone language interpreter service. One law enforcement officer who attended the training noted that “the information on strangulation was eye opening” – “I never realized how many times a domestic violence victim is victimized by strangulation” – and a prosecutor remarked that the training’s emphasis on a coordinated response was crucial. “We all need each other for communities to maximize safety and accountability.”

Ottawa Police Department

Ottawa, Kansas

www.ottawapolice.ca/en

When Dennis Butler left Virginia, where he’d trained some 300 officers in domestic violence protocols, to become chief of police in Ottawa, Kansas, it was like turning back the clock on domestic violence cases. He quickly started implementing best practices and, to their surprise, asked local advocacy groups for their input on new Department policies. With VAWA money, he also hired new personnel, including an officer, a sheriff detective, a domestic violence advocate, and a domestic violence coordinator for the county attorney’s office. The resulting joint Domestic Violence Unit not only prosecutes cases, it also trains other professionals and provides education programs for youngsters on family and dating violence. The Department’s programs further evolved to include, among other initiatives, a coordinated community response team; service on statewide committees to develop model policies and training curricula; and, most recently, a dedicated domestic violence court.

When Chief Butler goes to a new place to talk about domestic violence, he first looks up the community’s crime statistics. Invariably, domestic violence crimes rank in the top three. When

he shows the numbers to local elected officials, citizens, and medical personnel, they, almost invariably, are surprised.

Durham Police Department
Durham, New Hampshire
<http://www.ci.durham.nh.us/police>

In cooperation with the Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevent Program (SHARPP) of the University of New Hampshire, the Durham Police Department has retooled its handling of sexual assault cases – shifting officers’ traditional focus on investigating crimes to a deliberate emphasis on a survivor’s well-being. This approach – which has required something of a culture change among officers, prosecutors, and court personnel – has not only helped survivors, it’s also (not coincidentally) prompted others to report these crimes as well.

In Strafford County, where Durham and the University are located, the County Attorney’s Office has also instituted a formal Victim Assistance Program that’s unique in New Hampshire. The Program director and coordinator are trained to interview children and adult sexual assault survivors – and to protect them from having to recount an incident many times, survivors are interviewed only once, on videotape, in the County Attorney’s office. Also, once the Durham police receive a report of violence, the survivor is assigned a SHARPP advocate, who offers information, guidance, and a shoulder of support throughout.

South Carolina Office of the Attorney General: VAWA Office
Columbia, South Carolina
www.scag.gov

The Attorney General’s Office first received VAWA funds in 1994, and established this unit of two specialized prosecutors, a victim advocate, and a training coordinator. In addition to trying the most difficult cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, the Office trains law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and victim advocates across the state about the causes, consequences, and laws pertaining to domestic violence and sexual assault. The Office’s special prosecutors also serve as the backbone for the pro bono network of private attorneys who are enlisted to represent survivors in civil proceedings. Thanks, also, to this project, all but a few of South Carolina’s 46 counties have Criminal Domestic Violence Courts, which specialize in these unique proceedings.

Every year, the Office hosts a “Silent Witness” ceremony on the steps of the South Carolina Statehouse to remember each victim of a domestic violence homicide – so, as the Office puts it, “South Carolina and the nation understand what a significant problem criminal domestic violence is to our communities.” Relatedly, the Office also acts as a clearinghouse for criminal domestic violence statistics, again with the goal of helping raise awareness about the scope of the problem, and, ultimately, to prompt more aggressive action to address it.

Sumter Police Department: Jessica Gonzales Victim Advocate Sumter, South Carolina

www.sumterpd.com

In June 1999, Jessica Gonzales's three young daughters were abducted and killed by her estranged husband after the Colorado police failed to enforce a restraining order against him. Grants funded in her name support placement of special victim assistants in local law enforcement agencies to, among other things, improve the enforcement of protection orders. The Sumter police department, which serves a relatively small jurisdiction, decided to fill the position with paid interns from local colleges and universities – which has the added benefit of raising awareness about domestic violence and building leadership among young people on campus. In tandem with the department's permanent victim advocate, the interns help serve nearly 240 victims every six months, and the program has high rates of issued and enforced protection orders. Says one of the grant administrators: VAWA money has “had a wonderful impact” in changing Sumter's response to domestic violence. “If you have someone to go to, even just someone to talk to, it makes an enormous difference in the ability of [a survivor] to change her life.”

Moorhead Police Department Moorhead, Minnesota

www.cityofmoorhead.com/departments/police

The Moorhead Police Department has instituted a full day of violence-against-women training in its new officer academy – aiming, among other goals, to make clear its high expectations for officer responsiveness in these cases. Topics covered include strangulation, stalking, the impact on children who witness domestic violence, and officer safety in responding to domestic violence calls. In addition to the enhanced academy curriculum, all reports of domestic violence are forwarded to an advocate located in the prosecutor's office. Advocates and community partners, in turn, relay concerns about reports or investigations back to the department so officers can answer for them – and officers are evaluated on their reports, investigations, and follow-up in domestic violence cases. The Department has also developed special trainings on sexual assault and stalking – and, increasingly, potential stalking cases are being identified by officers and forwarded for prosecution.

City of Phoenix Cold Case Sex Crimes Team Phoenix, Arizona

www.phoenix.gov/police/investigations/cold-case/sex-crimes/victim-registry

In 1998, DNA evidence connected two serial sex offender cases the Phoenix Police Department had been investigating – and upon arrest, one of the perpetrators (linked to 17 rapes in three states) said: “There's more of me out there.”

Thus was born Phoenix's VAWA-funded Cold Case Sex Crimes Team, which started with a detective, a victim advocate, a forensic scientist to test backlogged rape kits, and a civilian crime analyst. The brainchild of Sergeant Jim Markey – and with the Department's most senior Detective, Don Newcomer, at his side – the team was (and is) driven by the recognition that sex offenders often strike repeatedly, and by a commitment to get these serial offenders off the streets.

In the beginning, the FBI's Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) was still in its infancy, so the team started its own rudimentary database and then consolidated other Phoenix databases with sex crimes evidence into one place. In one year, 2005, based on rape kits taken off the shelves and tested, the team got 150 "hits" in cold cases. The team is now up to five detectives (it still gets some 50-60 cold case hits a year), and is housed at the Phoenix Advocacy Center – which is a more comfortable place for survivors to share their stories than a police precinct. As the team knows, it can be traumatic for a survivor, many years later, to learn that her assailant has been identified or caught – and she often needs counseling and support to face what lies ahead. "Some victims have recovered and moved on," notes one team member. "Some have never recovered."

The Cold Case team has also partnered with sexual assault prosecutors in the Maricopa County Attorney's Office. These specially trained (also VAWA-funded) prosecutors have a unique understanding of how the evidence in these cases needs to be presented – and how, explains Sex Crimes Bureau Chief Rachel Mitchell, juries need to understand that just because a person may go into a bar or talk to a stranger, it "does not mean [she] asked to be sexually assaulted. Sexual predators prey on vulnerable people."

Since its inception, the team has reviewed over 3500 cold cases, and tested some 1800 rape kits. 1100 DNA profiles have been sent to CODIS and, of these, 762 have been linked to suspects and over 1000 have linked cases. The VAWA grant, says Sergeant Markey "was the lifeblood of this program."

West Virginia STOP Teams

www.wvcadv.org

Before VAWA, many of those involved in the West Virginia criminal justice system – police, prosecutors, victim service providers and advocates, court staff – had never communicated or coordinated. Now, West Virginia has 23 STOP teams focused on domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence – and which also include a funded advocate who helps survivors navigate the legal system. The effectiveness of these teams is "palpable," according to West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence Team Coordinator Tonia Thomas, who believes the model is now solidly entrenched in West Virginia's crime-fighting efforts, and will only continue to expand.

**South Carolina Victim Assistance Network:
Forensic Nurse Examiner Coordinator
Charleston, South Carolina**

www.scvan.org

Among its many programs on behalf of South Carolina's crime victims, the Victim Assistance Network houses the state's Forensic Nurse Examiner Coordinator project. Forensic and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) are professional experts who provide immediate, compassionate and comprehensive forensic evaluations and crisis treatment after a sexual assault. The evidence collected by these nurses routinely increases plea bargaining, prosecution and conviction rates for offenders. The South Carolina statewide coordinator, herself a forensic nurse examiner, has created a number of regional collaborations of medical facilities, law enforcement, advocates, and rape crisis centers – which has meant that no victim has to travel more than an hour for an exam (the Coordinator's goal is to cut that to 30 minutes), and rape kits can now be assembled in about three hours (down from six), including notes.

**13th Judicial District Attorney General's Office
Cookeville, Tennessee**

www.tndagc.com

This Office serves seven counties in Middle Tennessee, and employs a full-time domestic violence prosecutor, Stephanie Johnson, with VAWA funding. Johnson has not only won more of these difficult and unique cases, she has also been an empathetic counselor to domestic violence survivors. The Office, moreover, works closely with shelter programs, civil legal aid, and social services to address the non-legal immediate and long-term needs of survivors. In addition to her work with survivors, Johnson meets regularly with local police departments and provides training on safety planning, proper evidence-gathering techniques, community-coordinated responses, and issues specific to rural areas and substance-abusing populations. The Office served over 400 survivors in the last year, and has recently mounted successful prosecutions without survivor participation.

**Colorado District Attorneys' Council:
Ending Violence Against Women Program
Denver, Colorado**

www.cdaeweb.com

The Ending Violence Against Women Program of the Colorado District Attorneys' Council provides intensive training to the key actors – law enforcement, victim advocates, medical services, and prosecutors – who work with survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Experts also provide ongoing support and technical assistance, and according to the VAWA grant administrator, a program hallmark is the collaboration it fosters among these groups

– so everyone is on the same page in responding to a survivor. Demand for the trainings is high (last year, over 400 professionals attended the sessions), and the program also remains responsive to particular community needs. It recently targeted the unique issues associated with rural violence against Colorado women, for instance, and in response to law enforcement requests, will focus future trainings on model ways for writing up sexual assault reports.

**YWCA of Central Massachusetts:
Worcester and Leominster Intervention Networks
Worcester, Massachusetts**

www.ywcacentralmass.org

With local police and the Worcester County District Attorney’s Office, the YWCA has helped make domestic violence advocates an integral part of the Worcester and Leominster police departments. (The Worcester intervention network is called “W.I.N.,” the Leominster network, “L.I.N.”) When an officer receives a report, advocates proactively follow-up with a survivor – assessing for safety, finding shelter if necessary, getting needed legal, medical, and housing assistance, developing a safety plan, and making connections with other area services. Advocates also answer an around-the-clock emergency hotline. With over 4000 police reports of domestic violence in Worcester County alone, advocates have learned to triage and assess the dangerousness of a situation – to both get survivors to safety and identify high-risk perpetrators for a police response. The L.I.N. advocates are also fluent in Spanish and English. It is the goal of both networks to provide a “seamless delivery of services” to domestic violence survivors through comprehensive, trauma-informed, follow-up care and advocacy.

**West Virginia Supreme Court Administrative Office:
Multidisciplinary Collaboration
Charleston, West Virginia**

www.courtswv.gov/court-administration/administrative-office.html

Among other initiatives, the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence is working with the West Virginia Supreme Court to develop a protocol for assessing the dangerousness of domestic violence perpetrators, and to provide a heightened response (both vis-à-vis the victim and the offender) in the face of lethality indicators. This project looks at every state player with whom a survivor may interact – from law enforcement officers, victim advocates, lawyers, court personnel, and judges – to help identify the indicators and evaluate how the state can more effectively respond. The results of this broad, evidence-based effort will be rolled-out (with a tailored curriculum and training sessions) next year.

With VAWA funding, the Court has also worked with the state police to create a registry of all domestic violence protection orders. This means that the information from all 55 magistrate courts – the orders are scanned into the database within minutes of being issued – are collected in a central

server, which can be instantaneously accessed by law enforcement officers. Coalition Team Coordinator Tonia Thomas calls this new system “revolutionary,” because it gives officers responding to calls crucial information about the history of domestic abuse in the home. “Before the database, law enforcement officers would have to call individual precincts to see if there was a file on a particular victim or perpetrator,” she said. “Today we are working on a geo mapping system.”

In response to high rates of firearms-related fatalities – studies indicate that guns are used in over half of domestic violence deaths every year in West Virginia – the Coalition partnered with state courts, prosecutors, and police to develop a model firearms protocol, which, among other things, sets standards for removing guns from the hands of abusers who cannot legally possess them. According to Thomas, the initiative, which also uses VAWA money to fund background checks, has made a “night and day” difference in a state that ranks 8th in the number of women killed by their partners.

Yakima County Prosecutor’s Office **Yakima, Washington** www.yakimacounty.us/pa

The Yakima County Prosecutor’s Office works with a multidisciplinary team to support domestic and sexual violence survivors and to effectively present the cases against their abusers at trial. Prosecutor Patricia Powers, an expert in the field who has been trying these cases for over two decades, also teaches, consults, and mentors other prosecutors and service professionals about the distinctive dynamics of these crimes. With VAWA funding, Powers has conducted extensive training about the psychological impact of domestic and sexual victimization, and about how to best present these cases to a jury – covering the unique challenges of jury selection, presentation of evidence and witness testimony, cross-examination, and closing argument. As she tells prosecutors, the main thing to remember about these cases is “the amazing courage of the victims who testify,” often at great psychological cost, to help lock offenders away.

In one rape case Powers prosecuted, the perpetrator was caught via a DNA match, which also showed he was a serial rapist. With coordinated help from prosecutors, law enforcement, advocates, and victim witness professionals, the still-traumatized survivor was joined in taking the stand by the abuser’s previous victims in a show of solidarity. Given the strength of their collective testimony, he was convicted.

Office of the Colorado State Court Administrator **Denver, Colorado** www.courts.state.co.us/Administration

The Colorado State Court Administrator’s Office has used its court-specific VAWA funds to establish an online training tool for all Colorado state court judges. Designed to educate judges

about the distinct dynamics of domestic and dating violence and sexual assault, the program can be conveniently accessed on a judge's own time, at office or at home. To complement the online material, the Office publishes a quarterly VAWA newsletter that discusses changes in the law, highlights issues of note in the field, and examines case studies from around the country. VAWA funds have also been used to add a new, one-day "VAWA Institute" to the Annual Judicial Conference. Trainings are conducted, in part, by other judges (along with hired experts), and the day also gives judges a chance to share what they've learned while presiding over these often complicated cases. This year's program will include a keynote speech about domestic violence in the Native American community. The VAWA Institute has proven to be a particularly popular feature of the annual conference: attendance jumped from 40 to 100 judges in just one year.

Providing Essential Services

Alternatives Inc. of Madison County Madison County, Indiana www.alternativesdv.org

Alternatives Inc. serves over 700 domestic and sexual violence survivors yearly in six Indiana counties. Its shelter program, which CEO Mary Jo Lee calls the "heartbeat of our agency," provides: crisis response, treatment, and intervention for survivors; specialized services for children; training and education for law enforcement, businesses, faith organizations, teachers, and first responders; and education programs on dating violence and sexual assault for teens.

In 1997, Alternatives launched "There's No Room for Domestic Violence in Madison County" with 13 law enforcement agencies. It started by assessing county services and raising community awareness by, among other things, having teams of officers and advocates walk door-to-door with information packets. In time, domestic violence training for law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians was updated (before, "training" consisted of old videos); all 13 agencies signed onto a uniform set of protocols; officers have domestic violence response kits (a camera, recorder, and other tools for collecting evidence); and services have been upgraded, including to underserved populations. (For example, Alternatives has a full-time advocate in northern Madison County to serve survivors who live in migrant camps.)

In 2003, the program took its next step in cooperation with Ricker Oil Company, a locally-owned convenience store and gas station chain. Recognizing the need for (and many communities' lack of) a place where survivors could seek help at all hours, the Ricker family agreed that their 24-hour stores could be "safe havens" for fleeing or otherwise distressed survivors. Since then, Alternatives has trained nearly 600 Ricker employees at 20 stores on how to respond to survivors

who turn to them for help. Since the “There’s No Room” program took hold, arrests rates from domestic violence calls in the County have jumped from 29% to 73%.

Just one story. S had been abused and held captive by her boyfriend for several days. Among multiple injuries, she had a blow torch burn to her leg. One weekend, they drove to a Ricker’s station for gas. While the boyfriend was at the pump, S ran into the convenience store, frantically asking for help. The VAWA-trained employees called 911, and an officer and an Alternatives advocate were soon on the scene. Says S: “The Safe Haven program saved my life.”

Empowering Choice Housing Program

Juneau, Alaska

www.ahfc.us/rent/rental-programs/empowering-choice

Studies show that domestic and sexual violence are leading causes of homelessness: all too many survivors face the impossible choice between continued abuse at home or life on the streets, including for their children, if they leave. Created in 2012, the Empowering Choice Housing Program (EHP) is a first-of-its-kind collaboration between state domestic violence and sexual assault organizations and public housing authorities. The VAWA-funded shelters provide emergency housing and services, while the state partners provide housing vouchers and matching funds to help survivors find safe, affordable housing in the private marketplace.

As of July 2014, 188 families have been safely housed under the program (the majority are low-income mothers and their children), with 14 currently looking. The program has the capacity to safely house 254 families for 36 months. Says Peggy Brown, the Executive Director of the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault: “without VAWA and the support of our state and federal partners, this program would not be possible.”

Just one story. A pregnant mother of two escaped from her highly lethal partner to a local domestic violence shelter. As is often the case, she left in a hurry, leaving all her belongings, as well as her children’s, behind. When the abuser recognized that she had left, he fled the state, but not before cleaning out their bank accounts and destroying everything S owned – leaving her homeless and without any resources.

Referred by the shelter, S received an EHP voucher and, with the help of VAWA-supported services, began putting her life back together. The new baby was born in a stable, loving home, and after a year in the program, S found a job, bought a car, and is moving toward economic stability. “This program literally saved my life,” S says. “He never thought I would leave because I had nowhere else to go. Without this program, my children and I would be homeless.”

Amanda's Center for Local Resources, Office of the Fayette County Sheriff Lexington, Kentucky

www.fayettesheriff.com

In September 2009, Amanda Ross was fatally shot by her ex-fiancee, Steve Nunn, a former Kentucky state representative and one-time gubernatorial candidate. In response to the tragedy, Amanda's mother, Diana Ross, the Fayette County Sheriff, and community partners created Amanda's Center in 2012. (Ross also spearheaded the effort to pass legislation authorizing the use of GPS tracking devices to alert victims and authorities when an offender is nearby.) Amanda's Center operates within the sheriff's office, and is an around-the-clock, all-encompassing resource center for domestic violence survivors. VAWA funds support an intake specialist and two domestic violence deputies, who help get a survivor immediate, emergency help (like a protection order, transportation to a local shelter, or retrieval of her belongings) and who create an individualized safety plan for home, school, or work. Center staff also monitor offenders' compliance with court orders and firearm surrender rules.

Equally important, the Center serves as a centralized referral system for all responders and other professionals (advocates, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, court personnel, hospitals, therapists) in the community. Although Lexington offers a wide array of support systems, they are scattered throughout the area, making it confusing and daunting for a survivor to find help. Now, with Amanda's Center, there's a single point of contact at a safe (and child-friendly) location.

Each survivor who comes to the Center receives a journal filled with resource information and phone numbers – and which also includes poetry from Amanda's own journals and space for survivors to sort through their own pain and healing. As Fayette County Sheriff Kathy Witt says, at Amanda's Center, survivors “are told that they are not alone and that their life is valuable.” And VAWA funding, she adds, has made the Office's vision a reality. “It is because of [VAWA] that countless individuals victimized by domestic violence have been given hope.”

Legal Assistance Partnership Elkview, West Virginia

www.wvcadv.org

This Partnership between the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, legal aid lawyers, and the state's 14 licensed domestic violence programs provides survivors with comprehensive, personalized legal representation in a variety of proceedings. The project designates a local team – one attorney and one domestic violence advocate – to represent and support each survivor, whether it's in a custody dispute, an action to secure benefits, or to get a protection order. “These attorneys give victims peace of mind entering the courtroom,” says Coalition Team Coordinator Tonia Thomas, “as often the abusers hold all the purse strings.” The Partnership also provides substantive training, team protocols, and enlists members of the private bar and law schools to help in the effort. The teams serve an average 2000 people each year.

Just one story. S, a 25-year old mother of a young boy, lived in a remote rural West Virginia county. Her situation became increasingly grave when her abusive husband, with ready access to guns, became ever more erratic, jealous, and violent. S's rural isolation and economic dependence on her abuser only compounded the danger. When S fled the house, she had multiple legal problems: she needed a protection order, a divorce, help obtaining state benefits, and a medical card for her son. She couldn't afford a lawyer – but with the help of the Legal Assistance Partnership, she was successfully represented in all these proceedings.

Ending Violent Encounters Lansing, Michigan

www.eveinc.org

Ending Violent Encounters (EVE) provides emergency shelter and a full range of services for domestic violence survivors, including a 24-hour crisis hotline; assistance with housing, employment and legal needs; safety planning; counseling; parenting and jobs skills' classes; and education in schools. EVE also opened a unique Personal Protection Order Office, located in the circuit court, which helps survivors file for protection orders. The confidential, VAWA-funded advocates also screen every protection order request that comes through the court's doors – looking for those that are domestic-violence, sexual-assault, or stalking-related, and then sitting with victims (or potential victims) to talk about their safety and offer other legal or advocacy assistance. The Office sees some 3000 individuals a year, and of those, around 1,300 receive additional services. As measured by client feedback, EVE's success rate is impressive: 97% report feeling more supported, 92% learned new strategies for enhancing their safety, 97% got more information about community resources, and 92% became more knowledgeable about the protection-order process.

Turning Points Network Claremont, New Hampshire

www.free-to-soar.org

Turning Points Network (TPN) offers crisis and longer-term support services to female and male survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. With VAWA funds, it has also created the Economic Empowerment Program, which aims to help survivors become economically independent. Says Executive Director Deborah Mozden: the goal “is for survivors to be able to provide for themselves and their children and not have to rely on anyone or any system in the future, in particular, an abusive partner.”

A key first step for participants is to get into safe, transitional housing. From there, they meet with case managers to create an individual plan, including short and long-term benchmarks, and to identify the supports they need to make the plan a reality.

TPN itself lends a critical financial helping hand – underwriting costs for transportation, childcare, laptops, books, or supplies – so survivors can return to school, take job training classes, or even start a business. Many participants also take a financial education course, which teaches about a variety of financial matters, from daily budgeting to saving for a home. Along the way, TPN also connects survivors with counselors and support groups to help them heal from the pain and abuse of their pasts.

“It is an incredible feeling to work with a survivor and be able to send a check to her new landlord knowing she is now in a safe place of her own and working towards becoming self-sufficient,” Mozden says. “VAWA funds have been instrumental in the lives of these survivors. We are building relationships with landlords and have provided housing to women and children who would otherwise be homeless ... or have to remain in an abusive or unsafe relationship.”

Just one story. Four years into their marriage, S’s husband became jealous, controlling, and increasingly violent; he beat her repeatedly, strangled her, threw her into the walls, and stranded her on the side of the road. S saw her husband as a victim of his own hurtful past, and wanted to help him. “People will tell you ‘it’s not your fault,’” she recalls, “but deep down you do believe it is your fault.” One day, when he seriously injured S in front of their son, she fled and was eventually led to TPN. Four months later, she was in her own apartment, her son was happily in day care, and she was back in school. “I am finding out more about myself and my passions. ... I had no future goals. I only wished to have a safe normal day.”

TPN, S says, “basically invested in my new beginning. ... The fact that they were willing to help me monetarily gave me hope in my abilities. ... Maybe they saw something in me that I hadn’t yet seen in myself.” TPN staff helped S organize her affairs, connected her with a pro bono lawyer – “they even provided me with an outfit suitable for court” – paid for the first semester of school, had her car fixed, and helped with the rent. “I couldn’t have done any of this” without TPN, S says. “You can’t pull yourself up sometimes without a helping hand.”

“When you are in an abusive relationship, you begin to lose yourself. Your actions no longer become choices that better your life, but a web of unpredictable responses to stay alive. You do things that are out of character because you feel stuck, scared, hopeless, and confused. You have to try to think like a criminal in order to be proactive ... When you react in an abusive relationship, it is always too late. ... I rediscovered hope ... and that changes were possible. By completing tasks one day at a time, I am regaining confidence in myself and forming new aspirations.”

Another story. “I never used to understand why women in domestic violence situations didn’t just leave. When my husband began to control me, I didn’t see it right away. I didn’t know at the time that he was isolating me. He controlled the money, everything. ... Then the abuse became physical. ... He broke my teeth, head butted me, pulled out my hair, punched me in the face. Once he put me out of our home and I had to sleep out in the bitter cold with my dog.”

“I finally understood why women did not leave. Once you are isolated and controlled like that, you don’t realize anything ordinary or possible.”

“One day, I stopped in at TPN ... to talk and because I was so hungry. ... They offered me the safety of their shelter but I didn’t go right away. Every ounce of me felt humiliated and ashamed.”

“Being at the shelter changed everything. I started to feel stronger ... I finally felt safe. ... It was in the shelter that I first met Laura, a volunteer who was teaching other guests to quilt. ... We would sit in the sewing room at the shelter and talk. And she didn’t judge me. I was so used to being judged. ... [My] quilt represents the pieces and parts of my life and my putting my life back together with only the parts that are good for me, healthy for me.”

TPN “gave me kindness, time, structure, hope and made me believe in myself. I’ll never change for anyone again. I am putting my life back together. I found a home where I can have my dog and I got a job. ... I get up every day, hoping.”

Bridges Home **Rochester, New York** www.ywcarochester.org

Bridges Home, a VAWA-funded joint initiative by the YWCA of Rochester and Monroe County and Alternatives for Battered Women, helps find survivors permanent housing quickly – and then provides an array of support services for six months. Bridges Home works with the local housing authority and landlords to prioritize survivors of domestic violence. Once they’re secure and in their new homes, the program works to help survivors rebuild their lives – from providing temporary rent assistance, helping find work-skills training, or assuring that kids get into school programs. All the work is trauma-informed, culturally-sensitive, and personal. In just its first year, 77 families have been served by Bridges Home, with 14 in the full aftercare stage of the program.

Just one story. S left her home state with her newborn daughter to live with her boyfriend. At first, all was fine, with his family financially supporting them. To contribute and have some money of her own, S started working – but the boyfriend soon accused her of having an affair, isolated her, physically abused her, drained her bank account, and used her money to take his other girlfriends on lavish trips. After S left, he refused to let her take their daughter – and also stalked her via the family tracking application on her cell phone, paid bills with her debit card attached to the account, and refused to help pay the \$300 cancellation fee for his phone.

Feeling trapped, afraid, and alone, S was referred to Bridges Home by a 911 operator. The program helped S regain custody of her daughter and get a protection order, and also provided rental assistance, a security deposit, food, furniture, and transportation referrals. Advocates also helped remove the abuser from S’s cell phone plan, for which S was particularly appreciative: “it makes me think of other women in my situation who can’t pay astronomical cancellation fees and are

forced to continue to pay for a phone that is only used to hurt them. ... I thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me.”

Enough! Volunteer Corps Knoxville, Tennessee

www.ywcaknnox.com/programs/vap/enough

This VAWA-funded program, the brainchild of the YWCA in Knoxville, enlists trained volunteers to serve as advocates for domestic violence survivors in civil and criminal courts. These carefully vetted volunteers complete 40 hours of intensive training (20 of which is hands-on), and commit to a minimum of 12 volunteer hours a month. They help survivors prepare for court appearances and accompany them to the proceedings, offering emotional support and guidance throughout. Enough! volunteers also help their clients access other vital services, like housing assistance, food stamps, counseling, and legal aid. “We are really proud,” says YWCA Director of Programs Alle Lilly, that instead of having to turn survivors away, “we found a way to provide services ... even if we can’t pay full time staff to do it.” The YWCA hopes that this program, which has been “life changing in Knoxville,” will be replicated in other cities across the country.

New Orleans Family Justice Center New Orleans, Louisiana

www.nofjc.org

Born in the tragic aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans Family Justice Center is a partnership of agencies dedicated to ending domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Crescent House, the largest shelter program in New Orleans, flooded and then burned to the ground during the storm – and in the days and weeks that followed, the shelter director struggled to serve survivors with no facilities and an exhausted staff. Under these extreme conditions, collaboration with the police and other agencies in town was essential, and from that coordination grew the idea of providing services in a radically different way.

Rather than rebuild the shelter right away, the director focused on pulling together social services and legal support for survivors under one roof. The Justice Department stepped in to help with a special allocation of VAWA funds. Today, the Center is a thriving collaborative that provides counseling, services for both children and teens, civil legal aid, and immigration, education and employment assistance – all in one location. The Center also recently built a new (but smaller) emergency shelter, and with a VAWA grant provides rental assistance to families in need of longer-term housing.

In a philosophy supported by VAWA grants, the Family Justice Center believes that survivors should determine their own next steps and set their own goals. Says Director Mary Claire Landry: “VAWA provides us the flexibility to let survivors determine what they need, and the results have

been remarkable.” In 2013, the Center provided services to 1,066 survivors, including women, men, and children.

A few thoughts from survivors served by the Center:

- “When I was without hope, devastated by my husband, I believed that I was in prison. Before I was afraid to leave him, because I thought nobody would help me with housing, food, children, and my pregnancy. ... He loves me, that’s why he wanted to control me. I thought that because I was ignorant and blind. I was a slave because my husband was the only person who could tell me when, where, or what to do. Today I feel free because I met the Crescent House staff. I never thought the day would come when I could do something in my life. They helped me to believe in myself. ... [They] have helped me to be independent.”
- “Y’all don’t know how much you have helped me. Thanks for getting me something to eat because he don’t feed me, or give me my medicine or take me to dialysis.”
- “Thank you for allowing me to cry and you listen to my fears.”
- “The Family Justice Center saved my life and gave me hope.”

Sexual Assault Legal Institute
Silver Spring, Maryland
www.mcasa.org

Founded 10 years ago with VAWA money, the Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) is devoted exclusively to serving survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse in Maryland. Held up as a model for programs across the country, SALI offers comprehensive representation, including to children – running the gamut from protection orders, custody and divorce proceedings, U-Visa applications, and education, employment and housing disputes. At SALI, a survivor typically has one attorney for all matters: she is not handed off to an ever-changing group of lawyers nor forced to recount her story again and again. Since its inception, SALI has served over 1500 clients.

SALI’s five attorneys and two advocates also provide training and inspiration for the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault’s “Low Bono” program – which recruits and trains private lawyers to represent survivors, at \$50 an hour. SALI’s competitive legal intern program is also grooming the next generation of sexual assault attorneys – and SALI has trained thousands of other professionals (including victim advocates, prosecutors, private attorneys, nurses, college peer advocates, police officers, and mental health professionals) about the legal needs of sexual assault survivors in both the criminal and civil justice systems. SALI has a Spanish-speaking attorney on staff, and also offers services to those who speak French, Hindi and Urdu.

Just one story. One survivor did not report her own abuse until she walked in on her boyfriend sexually abusing their baby. SALI lawyers obtained a protection order and represented both mother and baby in criminal cases against him. The defense attorney claimed the mother fabricated the story to obtain a U Visa. SALI lawyers worked closely with the prosecutor to keep this allegation from being used in the criminal case – and, in the end, the abuser pleaded guilty to charges involving the baby. SALI lawyers thereafter won custody of the child for S, and are working on obtaining a U Visa for her.

The DOVES Program

Gering, Nebraska

www.dovesprogram.com

In the western panhandle of Nebraska, VAWA funds make it possible for the DOVES Program to provide on-the-ground services in nine counties covering nearly 12,000 square miles. DOVES advocates commute hundreds of miles a week to provide one-on-one counseling and hold support groups with domestic and sexual violence survivors, including with key at-risk populations in the local jails, substance abuse rehabilitation facilities, and job training centers.

DOVES also strives to be ever innovative. Last year, for instance, it transitioned from a stand-alone, shelter-based model to a hotel room voucher system – and by providing its support services in hotels rather than shelters, DOVES has increased the number of survivors sheltered by 25% while decreasing overhead and upkeep costs by 40%. Also, the new approach has drawn positive feedback from survivors, many of whom find the hotel setting more welcoming than a shelter, where families often have to share tight spaces with strangers.

DOVES also works with undocumented immigrant survivors, who are often easily victimized because they are afraid to contact the police and afraid to leave their abusers. By helping them attain legal residency in this country, DOVES has drawn many of these survivors out of the shadows. DOVES also spreads its anti-violence message through classes and trainings at local schools and colleges. Among other programs, advocates talk to graduating seniors in a “Senior Sendoff” about dating violence, healthy relationships, and bystander intervention strategies – and its “Hands Are For Growing” program works with 6th-8th graders who grow their own gardens while learning about healthy relationships. DOVES is also one of six programs across the country selected for the new VAWA-funded Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative, and it plans to use the funding, among other things, to better get services to sexual assault survivors in rural areas.

Says DOVES Executive Director Hilary Wasserburger: “It would be impossible for us to provide the range of services, across the nine counties that DOVES serves, without VAWA funding.” And even beyond the money, Wasserburger credits VAWA’s strict confidentiality rules and requirement that services be provided without proof of eligibility with dramatically improving DOVES’ ability to care for and support survivors.

Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault: Pro Bono Program Juneau, Alaska

www.andvsa.org/pro-bono-program

Using a hybrid model of staff and volunteer attorneys, the Alaska Network's Pro Bono Program has been providing comprehensive civil representation to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking for 15 years. In 2014, private lawyers donated some \$1.2 million in legal services – and, along with lawyers on the Network's staff, represent survivors on a full range of matters, including divorce, custody, child support, employment, housing, immigration, consumer, and protection order cases. Clients are referred from trained legal advocates in member programs statewide, who help screen the cases, provide safety planning, and support survivors as needed throughout their cases.

By enlisting the private bar, the Network is able to provide a broader range of services to a broader geographic range of clients on a broader swath of issues (such as immigration or employment law) on which in-house counsel may lack expertise. Many volunteers have donated over 100 hours to their clients – and 100% of clients who have evaluated the program say they felt safer as a result of having a lawyer at their side.

A couple representative reports:

- “I would not have been brave enough to do this by myself! Thank you!”
- “My attorney has done an incredible job. Her legal advice and experience has helped me keep custody of my child. She has been a godsend!”

And as Network Executive Director Peggy Brown says, VAWA funding for this program “has made all the difference.”

New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence: Domestic Violence Specialist Project Concord, New Hampshire

www.nhcadsv.org/Partnerships.cfm

Created with VAWA funds, the New Hampshire Coalition's Domestic Violence Specialist Project provides specialized help to families victimized by both domestic violence and child abuse. Each domestic violence specialist works both at the local crisis center and at the state child protective services agency. When the agency receives a report of child abuse or neglect where domestic violence is involved, the child welfare worker contacts the domestic violence specialist – and together, they develop a safety plan, accounting for lethality indicators and other risks. Often, the specialist also works directly with the survivor and child.

The connection to a domestic violence specialist can be a lifeline, as it brings expertise and wisdom to an often volatile situation. “In families where one partner controls the other through fear or physical violence,” explains Christina Presenti of the New Hampshire Coalition, “having someone in their lives asking questions about safety and family dynamics can cause the controlling partner to change their behavior, sometimes becoming sneakier, scarier, and more hurtful. This is a critical time for a victim to connect with an experienced domestic violence specialist, who can talk to them about ways to stay safe.”

More globally, the Project’s 13 specialists also train child welfare workers on the effects of domestic violence on kids, crisis center services, safety planning, and lethality indicators. The Project has also helped shine a light on the connections between child abuse and domestic violence, and has recommended ways the New Hampshire child protective system, the courts, and the advocacy communities can better respond in these heart-breaking cases.

Just one story. S, whose son was in foster care, and who had also often been hurt by the boy’s father, was afraid to do anything other than what the man said. She was also too afraid to talk to child protective services, because she felt blamed for what had happened to the boy. A domestic violence specialist helped turned the tide: together, they created safety plans, and S began doing things on her own, if only to take a walk. As her confidence grew, she made a bolder plan – and with the specialist at her side, presented it to child protective services. Eventually, she was able to leave the boy’s father and, with her son, is now living in a safe, stable place.

Cadillac Area OASIS/Family Resource Center **Cadillac, Michigan** www.cadillaccoasis-frc.org

The OASIS/Family Resource Center is a comprehensive shelter program whose specially trained counselors and legal advocates help survivors and their children on many fronts, whether it’s finding longer-term housing or transportation, providing support in court proceedings, or accessing other social services. OASIS also runs a parenting program with an in-home component, where advocates help resolve family disputes and institute more lasting changes. OASIS/FRC also offers weekly trauma-sensitive yoga and mindfulness/meditation counseling sessions for sexual assault survivors. These research-based programs have shown impressive results: 100% of surveyed participants report improvements, including in their levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.

“Our program is not just a singular service,” says Director Sally Repeck. “The impact of sexual violence on a family is generational and economic. We work systemically and economically to enhance victims’ and their families’ lives.”

Just one story. S’s partner of two-and-a-half years abused her emotionally and physically: at least three times, she was hospitalized for severe injuries, including broken ribs, concussions, renal contusions, hematomas, and long-term damage to her wrist. She was referred to OASIS by the police. Over the course of counseling at the shelter, an even more heart-breaking story emerged:

as a young child, S had been sexually abused by a family friend for over two years, but had never told anyone about it. And she developed post-traumatic stress disorder during her six-year service in the Army.

Therapy was very difficult for S, who at first did not want to confront her past -- but after two years of counseling and then via yoga and guided meditation, she underwent, in the words of Repeck, a “transformation.” Among the most difficult of her achievements, S wrote and presented a victim witness statement at the criminal trial of her abuser. Now, she is financially independent, recently completed her degree, and is very involved with two area veterans groups. Again from Repeck: “When you meet this confident, intelligent woman you get a sense of strength and empowerment.”

Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA) Kansas City, Missouri (and Kansas)

www.mocsa.org

What sets MOCSA apart from other rape crisis and sexual assault centers is its extensive use of highly trained volunteers. MOCSA’s service area is wide – spanning seven counties in two states – and each day, some six volunteers join MOCSA’s 36 staff to respond to the 24-hour crisis line, assist survivors at one of 20 area hospitals, connect survivors with shelter and resources, and support them in legal proceedings. Last year, 150 volunteers provided some 37,385 hours of service, the cash equivalent of \$827,701.

MOCSA works with seven different prosecuting attorneys’ offices and over 40 law enforcement agencies to ensure that survivors’ voices and needs factor into the criminal justice system. Advocates follow up any time a survivor calls the hotline or makes a report to a hospital or law enforcement – to help with safety planning, next steps, confidential counseling (MOCSA also counsels loved ones, friends and families on how to provide support), and other vital services.

MOCSA also understands that, sometimes, simple things can make an important difference. When one abuser crushed a woman’s glasses and stole her dentures just days before Thanksgiving, MOCSA volunteers got replacements within two days so the survivor could join her family for dinner with her dignity intact. Another time, MOCSA volunteers sat with a survivor, who had been sexually assaulted and had no family, throughout an entire court proceeding – simply ensuring that she did not feel alone. (Her abuser was accompanied in court by his whole family.) And advocates also come to the hospital with Assault Survivor Kits – sweatshirt and pants, a change of underwear, toothbrush, comb and other basic necessities – so a survivor doesn’t have to leave the hospital in the clothes she was raped in, or which have been added to a rape kit.

Executive Director Julie Donelon says that although MOCSA has other funding streams, without VAWA money, “we would not have the kind of broad reach and community involvement that we do.”

Voices of Hope
Lincoln, Nebraska
www.voicesofhopelincoln.org

A long-time provider of domestic violence services, Voices of Hope has recently expanded to serve survivors of sexual assault and stalking as well. It operates a 24-hour crisis line; provides crisis and “drop-in” counseling; offers safe and confidential support groups (along with free child care); accompanies survivors to the hospital and to police interviews 24 hours a day; and provides legal advocacy, including help filing for a protection order, developing a safety plan, and being at a survivor’s side at all stages of a legal proceeding, from arrest through probation or parole.

With VAWA funds, Voices of Hope continues to innovate: it recently evaluated how responders, such as advocates, police officers, and medical providers treat survivors in the aftermath of a sexual assault, and worked with these and other stakeholders to make improvements. These include training police in better, trauma-informed interview techniques; a consolidated interview and medical exam process so survivors need only tell their story once (and which also reduces post-assault processing times by several hours); and improved communication between domestic violence and sexual assault prosecutors to more quickly identify and prosecute violent offenders. Post-audit reports indicate that the reforms are successful: now, as many as 70% of survivors say they are willing to help police charge their attackers – up from just 10% before – because they feel more respected and better understood.

Voices of Hope also used VAWA money to help institute new survivor-centered post-arrest procedures with all four law enforcement authorities in the Lincoln area. Now, upon arrest, Voices of Hope is alerted immediately and the alleged offender isn’t released (if at all) until the next morning. This gives advocates time to get protection orders and ensure that survivors and their children are in a safe place.

“We now have a chance to review every situation” before an offender is released, says Executive Director Marcee Metzger, who praised the community’s willingness to include Voices of Hope in the process. Voices of Hope also provides a victim advocate, housed in the Women’s Center at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, to serve student, faculty, and staff survivors of relationship violence, sexual assault, and stalking on campus.

SAFE
Hamilton, Montana
www.safeinthebitterroot.org

Before receiving VAWA funds, SAFE (Supporters of Abuse Free Environments) had a very limited capacity – and its two-bedroom shelter was often vacant for lack of money to let survivors in this mountainous Montana valley know about it. Now, SAFE’s transitional housing program gives about 13-15 families left homeless by domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking a safe place to live for two years. By lifting that burden, the program gives survivors a chance to return

to school, get training for a higher-paying job, and reconnect with their neighbors over a meal or in the housing's community garden.

The VAWA money, which Executive Director Stacy Umhey says “totally changed the landscape” for SAFE, also now lets it help survivors with seemingly little things that can make a big difference. One young mother in the program, for instance, couldn't drive and didn't have a car, so she spent hours every day pushing her kids in a stroller to and from day care, including in frigid Montana winters. SAFE staff helped her learn to drive, get a license, and found someone in the community to donate a car.

Also with VAWA money, SAFE has been able to fill long-identified gaps in its services for children. It now employs two children's services staff and provides individual support to between 60 and 90 kids a year. Recently, staff obtained fair passes for the kids, and takes them on nature walks to work through the complicated emotions that often come with being the child of an abusive relationship.

SAFE also helped create the county's Domestic and Sexual Violence Coalition, which, again, wouldn't have been possible without VAWA, says Umhey. The Coalition's legal committee helps judges, prosecutors, and police understand the dynamics and warnings signs of domestic violence, and how to help prevent further harm. The medical issues committee has expanded domestic and sexual violence screenings in the valley – and medical personnel wear buttons that say, “It's OK to talk to me about domestic violence.” Along the same lines, the Coalition sponsors an annual “Love is Respect” poster competition in the local high school. The winning poster is replicated with tear-off cards bearing SAFE's crisis hotline number, and is displayed in hospitals, examination rooms, and public bathrooms throughout the Bitterroot valley.

Faith House
Lafayette, Louisiana
www.faithhouseacadiana.com

In keeping with a key VAWA best practice, Faith House provides “survivor-directed” advocacy for 2,500 women and children in south and central Louisiana every year. At its emergency shelter, survivors develop their own goals and plans, and Faith House acts as the connecting point to other community services to help transform the plans into reality. Faith House staff provide a wide range of stable, consistent support, from accompanying survivors to court to helping them find long-term housing. As Executive Director Billi Lacombe puts it: “We offer a special and warm touch to women who have been abused, and VAWA funds help us do that.”

Faith House also maintains a notable presence in diverse communities, bridging cultural divides and tailoring its services to particular needs. It serves Louisiana Cajun Country, which carries its own unique culture and language, as well as the Vietnamese community and several Indian tribes – including the Jena Band of Choctaw, which Faith House recently helped apply for a VAWA grant to develop its own police department.

Dawson County Domestic Violence Program Glendive, Montana

www.dcdv.org

With VAWA funds, and in collaboration with adjacent county coalitions, the Dawson County Domestic Violence Program established Coordinated Community Response Teams throughout 10 rural eastern Montana counties. According to Executive Director Susan Anderson, the VAWA money revolutionized the scope and quality of services the programs are able to offer. VAWA funds lawyers, for instance, to represent survivors in contested protection order, child support, custody and dissolution proceedings. Recently, as the oil boom has created job opportunities in Montana and North Dakota, offenders have been taking their children across state lines in violation of established parenting plans – which Program lawyers are increasingly called upon to enforce. Staff attorneys also serve as liaisons for survivors in criminal cases, accompanying them to interviews with police, prosecutors, and to court. Anderson notes that having a lawyer at a survivor’s side is among the most important services a program can provide beyond shelter, safety, and emotional support.

Just one story. S moved to eastern Montana when her husband found work on a nearby oilfield. Shortly thereafter, he began to beat and stalk her relentlessly. Without a job, money, or a local support network, S appeared at one of the eastern Montana program offices, broken and afraid for her life. The Program determined, per its lethality assessment, that the husband might well kill her. In addition to shelter, Program advocates obtained a protection order, found her transitional housing, and started working with S to rebuild her life. Today, S is working in the area as a Certified Nurse’s Assistant, and her employer has offered to pay for further training – in part because she earned the best performance evaluation ever given to an employee. Only with the sort of broad and varied support made possible by VAWA, says Anderson, was the Dawson Program able to help S chart an entirely new trajectory.

Family Crisis Services of Northwest Mississippi, Inc. Oxford, Mississippi

www.oxfordadvocacy.org

Family Crisis Services of Northwest Mississippi can be an emergency room’s first call when a survivor comes after an assault. Not only does it work closely with the community’s special VAWA-funded prosecutor, it also provides survivors with a suite of core services, including 24-hour crisis intervention, referrals, court and hospital accompaniment and advocacy, counseling (including for a survivor’s friends and family), and assistance with compensation and other such claims. As Executive Director Lea Anne Lemmons notes, Family Crisis Services has been with some survivors “from beginning to end.”

Located three miles from the University of Mississippi campus, the organization also serves and advocates for students. Says Lemmons: “[we] are most proud of our progress on the relationship

with Ole Miss, in terms of their acknowledgement of date and acquaintance rape problems, and on implementation of a sexual assault victim’s policy on campus.”

WISE

Lebanon, New Hampshire

www.wiseftheuppervalley.org

WISE is the primary provider of domestic and sexual violence services for 21 communities across three counties in two states, New Hampshire and Vermont. The towns it serves range in size from 300 to 13,000, over an 872-square mile radius. WISE’s services, says Executive Director Peggy O’Neil, are driven by the voices of survivors, and include: a 24-hour confidential crisis line; emergency shelter (in a newly renovated, confidentially located building); transitional housing assistance; legal aid (through both financial assistance and referrals to pro bono lawyers); safety planning; support groups and workshops; and in-person advocacy at police stations, in court, at hospitals, and with social service agencies.

WISE also reaches survivors in other creative ways, such as through writing groups, yoga classes, sobriety meetings, and a therapeutic horse riding program, Get WISE with High Horses. This spring, WISE launched “Unedited Voices,” where survivors workshopped artwork, poems, and stories that were directed professionally and performed at the Lebanon Opera House. The collection, later compiled, memorializes tales of surviving and thriving after violence. WISE is also a catalyst for community change. For six years, for example, it has partnered with the Lebanon Police Department to bring nationally renowned experts in for day-long trainings on investigating and prosecuting sexual assault. This initiative helped set the stage for the Upper Valley Sexual Assault Resource Team, a multi-disciplinary collaboration that WISE initiated and organized. VAWA funds have also supported WISE’s Domestic Violence Specialty Program, by which a specially trained WISE advocate consults with and trains child protection staff who work with families hurt by domestic violence and child abuse.

A few thoughts from survivors served by WISE:

- “I don’t know where I would be today if it wasn’t for this organization. ... I could still be homeless, I could still not have my grandsons, honestly, I could be dead. ... [With WISE’s help, I have learned] that I am not worth less than anybody else ... I am strong.”
- “My girls and I will never forget what you did to help us. You helped me show my girls that domestic violence is never okay.”
- “WISE broke me out of isolation – alone wasn’t a big enough word to describe how I was feeling.”

Fort Berthold Coalition Against Domestic Violence New Town, North Dakota

www.ndcaws.org/resources

On the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota, the Fort Berthold Coalition Against Domestic Violence has used VAWA money to build deep community partnerships to improve services for survivors and better hold offenders accountable. Beginning in 2010, the Coalition has conducted training and awareness events on domestic violence and sexual assault in local schools, community centers, tribal courts, and in jail. Awareness posters are “literally everywhere” on the reservation, says Executive Director Sadie Young Bird. This concerted community engagement has paid off: since 2010, there’s been a nearly 400% increase in the number of new clients who walk through the Coalition’s doors. In response to the emerging demand, the Coalition this year opened its first emergency shelter with VAWA funding. The shelter fills an urgent need, as survivors before had to travel up to eight hours to find emergency housing.

Young Bird also created the community’s first Sexual Assault Response Team, which integrates the Coalition with tribal law enforcement, federal prosecutors, and local hospitals. Now, Coalition advocates are at a survivor’s side from beginning to end, whether it’s with officers at the scene, accompanying survivors to medical examinations, or being with them through a criminal case. In close collaboration with the North Dakota United States Attorney’s Office, the Coalition’s support has encouraged survivors to participate in cases against their assailants: some 90% of sexual assaults are now prosecuted federally, up from a very small percentage just a few years ago.

These Coalition-led partnerships will now enter a new phase, as tribal courts prepare to prosecute non-Indians who commit acts of domestic violence on Indian country under the new authority of VAWA 2013.

Jackson Rape Crisis Center Jackson, Mississippi

www.catholiccharitiesjackson.org/services/rape.crisis.html

Founded in 1984 by Catholic Charities, the Jackson Rape Crisis Center provides a full suite of services to sexual assault survivors in central Mississippi, including a 24-hour crisis line, mental health and crisis intervention, emergency shelter, short and long-term outpatient counselling, and law enforcement escorts. In partnership with the University of Mississippi Medical Center, it established one of the first Sexual Assault Response Teams in the state, a VAWA hallmark for multidisciplinary coordination.

Throughout its history, the Center has been able to serve more survivors by recruiting and training committed volunteers. Indeed, Dr. Gwen Bouie-Haynes, the Center’s Director, was a member of its first class of volunteers in 1984. The volunteer manual covers the waterfront: the medical, legal, and psychological facets of rape, listening skills, how to interact with police officers and

medical personnel, crisis intervention, substance abuse, counseling, advocacy. It is a model for others throughout Mississippi.

Bouie-Haynes says that much of the Center's work would not be possible without VAWA: its legal assistance clinic; its emergency shelter and transitional housing programs (which provide safe places to live for up to a year and sometimes two); and other enhanced services that, as Bouie-Haynes puts it, provide a "beacon of hope for many traumatized victims and survivors." VAWA money has also allowed the Center to engage Jackson-area men to speak out within the African American communities and faith-based organizations against rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence. And through its "Mall Watch" programs, the Center brings its resources to shopping malls, providing ready access to survivors who might not otherwise reach out for help.

House of Ruth Maryland

Baltimore, Maryland

www.hruth.org

House of Ruth Maryland is the state's largest domestic violence service provider, assisting 9000 survivors a year and upwards of 500 of their children. The organization's work is comprehensive: not only does it provide emergency shelter and operate a 24/7 hotline, House of Ruth Maryland provides legal services (it has offices in area courthouses), emergency hoteling, transitional housing, abuse intervention, a health clinic (which is staffed and supported by the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing), and counseling – all under one roof.

House of Ruth Maryland also provides statewide training for other professionals in the field, and ensures that its services are culturally and linguistically sensitive: 15% of the staff is bi-lingual and can serve speakers of Spanish, French, and African languages. Language barriers and the threat of deportation have made House of Ruth's bi-lingual services and advocates especially crucial for survivors in Maryland's growing Hispanic/Latino population.

Baltimore judges routinely refer abusers to House of Ruth's intervention program, the Gateway Project, and frequently hold offenders accountable when they fail to meet the program's expectations. Through this partnership, reports the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, many judges have come to take domestic violence more seriously than their counterparts in other jurisdictions. Gateway is also unique because it addresses abusers' individual situations, be it a culture that condones violence against women, or who themselves feel disenfranchised in their communities.

House of Ruth Maryland is also a legislative advocate, having most recently led a statewide effort to have domestic-violence crimes designated as such in court records. This will allow for these crimes to be tracked – giving Marylanders a better sense of the scope of the problem – and will also alert judges to patterns of abuse by offenders who appear in their courtrooms.

**Office of the Chief Medical Examiner:
Family and Intimate Partner Homicide Surveillance Project
Richmond, Virginia**

www.vdh.virginia.gov/medExam/familyintimatepartnerviolencehomicidesurveillance.htm

With the help of VAWA funding, Virginia launched its Family and Intimate Partner Homicide Surveillance Project in 1999. Since then, the Chief Medical Examiner has been collecting data about these homicides – categorizing them by victim and offender traits, relationship history, risk factors, precipitating characteristics, and circumstances of the homicide – and publishing an annual report. The Project has become a cornerstone for identifying at-risk populations in Virginia and developing evidence-based interventions. Among the Examiner’s findings over the past 15 years: over one-third of Virginia murders are domestic violence-related; over half of these involve a gun; approximately 40% are committed after or while a relationship is ending; women are more likely to be killed at the hands of an intimate partner, where men are more likely to be killed as a bystander or in an altercation over an intimate partner; and over one-fifth of the homicides are murder-suicides. In addition to informing policies and training protocols, the Project has helped establish 18 Family and Intimate Partner Homicide Fatality Review Teams throughout Virginia, helping communities develop coordinated strategies for getting victims help before violence turns lethal.

**Blue Water Safe Horizons
Port Huron, Michigan**

www.bwsh.org

Blue Water Safe Horizons (BWSH) offers survivors shelter and “wraparound” support, including counseling, advocacy during medical treatment, legal aid, and housing assistance. One of its shelters has a pet sanctuary so survivors can bring their animals with them, as well as a garden for teaching nutrition. Leveraging VAWA dollars, BWSH has also helped build a cadre of pro-bono lawyers who, along with program-funded counsel, represent survivors in custody disputes and immigration proceedings, secure protection orders, monitor medical care, and help secure transitional housing. Through litigation, BWSH has also ensured that landlords can no longer evict sexual assault survivors for reporting their abuse.

Just one story. When 18-year-old S came into shelter, she had been beaten and raped by her stepfather and was pregnant with his child. Upon learning of the pregnancy, S’s mother kicked her out of the house. Suicidal, S came to a priest, who connected her with BWSH – which, along with shelter, provided her with counseling and advocacy, including working with law enforcement to have her stepfather charged with rape. With BWSH’s support, S decided to keep her baby, has moved into secure long-term supportive housing, and continues to work through her trauma via BWSH’s outreach counseling.

BWSH also recently helped a Rwandan genocide survivor, who was trafficked into the community but afraid to talk to anyone, secure a VISA and transitional housing. “You would think this wouldn’t happen because we are in the middle of nowhere,” says BWSH Executive Director Sarah Prout. “But sex trafficking is occurring everywhere” – and BWSH not only helped this survivor navigate the immigration system, it also worked with law enforcement to track down the traffickers.

The Haven
Houma, Louisiana
www.havenhelps.org

Founded in 1981 and located in the rural parish of Terrebonne, the Haven serves the Bayou communities of the gulf coast. Last year, it answered more than 900 crisis calls and provided shelter to over 200 women and children. With VAWA funds, the Haven adopted a trauma-informed model for providing domestic violence services – which includes a physical space that promotes healing and services tailored for each survivor. Says Director Julie Pellegrin: “I am passionate about the model ... which means creating an environment that is welcoming, inviting, and focused not only on physical safety but on emotional needs.” Rather than communal living, for instance, the Haven provides each family with its own living space. “It’s a very personal approach that first and foremost involves treating everyone who comes to the door with dignity and respect,” says Pellegrin. Without VAWA, she adds, these services would not be possible.

Just one story. Several years ago, a woman who had been in an abusive relationship for 40 years reached out for help. She had been beaten, severely injured, and raped by her husband many times over the years. After he threatened to kill her and showed her where he intended to bury her body, she called the Haven and lived there safely for eight months. Writes her daughter: “The Haven provided resources to my mom so she could live in the outside world and become independent. My mom knew that her healing process would just be a process, after all she had 40 years of issues and damage to work through. She was ready to try. We were all so happy, at the age of 57 my mom was going to begin her life, a life she deserved.”

Although this brave woman died from an illness three years later, her family is grateful that the Haven helped her find peace and comfort in her final years.

Heartly House
Frederick, Maryland
www.heartlyhouse.org

In addition to shelter and counseling, Heartly House operates a 24-hour hotline, provides survivors with legal aid (from protection orders through divorce proceedings), runs an offender group counseling program, and has a child psychologist on staff to work with kids who’ve witnessed

abuse. Heartly House partners with a regional hospital to provide advocacy and support for survivors during forensic exams, which can last up to five hours. And in conjunction with law enforcement, it has led the effort to develop the state's Lethality Assessment Program – which identifies the indicators for high-risk abuse, outlines safety plans, and establishes follow-up protocols. Heartly House was among the first to start proactively calling high-risk survivors and to use the Lethality Assessment with survivor-initiated calls to the hotline. Some 75-80% of women who come into shelter score high on the Lethality Assessment, and Heartly House has worked to get law enforcement officers to do the screening and connect women most at risk with Heartly House services. Since the beginning of this collaboration, Frederick County has seen a marked drop in its homicide rate.

Notably, Heartly House boasts a high staff retention rate: its management team stays for an average of 12 years, and all employees are intensively trained and encouraged to pursue opportunities for professional growth. As a further indication of its good work, Heartly House receives some four to five unsolicited donations each week from members of the community.

Muscogee (Creek) Nation Family Violence Prevention Program Okmulgee, Oklahoma

www.muscogeenation-nsn.gov/Pages/FamViolence/famviol.html

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation Family Violence Prevention Program serves survivors in a 5,000-square-mile area that includes both tribal and state lands. The heart of the program is its provision of direct services: professional advocates are available at all hours to help secure protection orders, transport survivors to shelter, help them prepare for court appearances, sit with them on the stand as they testify, and get them needed counseling and other services. With the help of VAWA money, the program has increased the number of victims it serves from 54 in 2009 to 247 in 2013. In one recent day, the Program had six intakes before noon. “It shows our outreach is working,” says Program Director Shawn Partridge. “People know where to go to get help.” The program has recently expanded to serve child victims of sexual assault.

The Program also convened three coordinated response teams (another VAWA hallmark) of tribal and non-tribal prosecutors, investigators, court personnel, and victim service providers: now, unlike before, law enforcement officers have a ready place to refer survivors for services and support. And under the VAWA 2013 amendments, the Nation is actively preparing to exercise special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction in cases that were previously beyond its reach.

Just one story. Last year, a tribal citizen was shot 10 times by her boyfriend. During her five-to-six week stay in the hospital, the Program provided regular support to S and her family. Against the odds, S survived – and, with the help of a Program advocate, assisted in the successful prosecution of her attacker. While she remains in recovery (and still has bullets in her body), she's in school and doing well – and has made it something of a mission to help bring strength and inspiration to other survivors.

YWCA North Central Indiana South Bend and Elkhart, Indiana

www.ywcancin.org

Nearly 1600 women and children find help each year at the YWCA, including emergency shelter, counseling (including for adult survivors of childhood incest), drug abuse treatment, and classes in financial literacy, job readiness, and job retention. VAWA also funds an attorney who can obtain protection orders (the paperwork for these can be daunting for often traumatized survivors); a bi-lingual domestic violence advocate; and the YWCA's signature transitional housing program: to help survivors get their own apartment, the YWCA will pay outstanding utility bills (which often sink a survivor's credit rating), and guarantee rent payments for a year.

The Y's VAWA-funded CourtWatch program places volunteers in courtrooms to monitor protection order, domestic violence, and sexual assault cases – and the resulting analysis of the proceedings is used by judges and prosecutors to improve their responsiveness to survivors. In the wake of CourtWatch reports, for instance, an ever increasing number of protection orders has been granted (up to 78% from 38%); survivors are separated from perpetrators in the courtroom; and a domestic violence fatality review team has been formed. In order for CourtWatch monitors to hear the proceedings, the YWCA paid for sound amplification in 12 courtrooms. As a collateral benefit, survivors can now also hear everything judges say – and juries, too, can better hear the testimony, including of often hard-to-understand child witnesses. The YWCA has also developed a dual treatment program for domestic violence survivors with addictions, recognizing the interconnectedness of the two circumstances.

Reactions from two survivors:

- “This program showed me how domestic violence and addiction go hand in hand,” said one woman whose abuser supplied her with drugs to keep her from leaving him. “It made me realize that if I did not deal with both these problems I would be back in another two months with another relapse as well as another episode of violence. Today I am sober and violence free!”
- “I was terrified my husband was going to hurt me or my kids. I knew I needed to go to court to get something that would keep him away from us ... but I wasn't sure how any of it worked. Fortunately, the YWCA's legal advocate walked me through the whole process ... I was so happy she was there in court with me. “

Parents and Children Together Honolulu, Hawaii

www.pacthawaii.org

Among its many services, Parents and Children Together (PACT) operates Family Peace Centers on three islands, where professionals provide advocacy for survivors, domestic violence counseling for abusers, and intervention services for children. For women and children who can no longer remain in their homes, PACT operates a domestic violence shelter – named “Ohia” after the first tree to grow after a lava flow – where survivors receive legal, medical, financial and housing assistance, and where they and their children can also see an on-site substance abuse counselor. PACT also runs a Family Visitation Center, which facilitates supervised visits during domestic violence custody disputes.

In 2008, PACT Director Ruthann Quitquit recognized a notable trend: while 30% of abused women with children returned to their abusers after receiving services at Ohia, the percentage was much higher (65%) for their counterparts without children. Hence, and with VAWA funding, PACT opened Lehua House (Lehua is the flower of the Ohia tree) on O’ahu – which offers transitional housing for up to one year for women without children who have left domestic violence, and who are in job training, school, or trying to return to work.

PACT also organized a state-wide memorandum of understanding with Hawaii’s nine shelters, so women can be placed where their future housing, employment, and other needs might best be met. Thanks to this VAWA-sponsored collaboration, survivors who were not safe on their remote islands have been flown to Lehua House or placed in other safe transitional or permanent housing, and have received a variety of training and support services.

Pittsburgh Action Against Rape Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

www.paar.net

Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR) has been providing comprehensive and innovative services to sexual assault survivors, including children and those who were assaulted as children, for over 42 years. It has been a leader in providing trauma-informed therapy and an advocacy pioneer as well. In the 1980s, its then Executive Director was held in contempt of court for refusing to turn over client records, an act of bravery that led to the first law in the nation recognizing confidentiality between survivors and their rape crisis counselors.

In 2011, PAAR led the effort to create the first Sex Offender Court in Pennsylvania, the third state in the nation to adopt this model. Judges with specialized knowledge of sexual assault preside over the court, which also hears the cases on an accelerated schedule, helping bring closure to survivors and preventing them from having to revisit the trauma years later. Before the court was instituted, sexual assault cases took between 18-24 months to come to trial; now, it’s three-to-nine

months. The court also holds regularly scheduled compliance hearings, so an offender’s post-conviction behavior can be closely monitored.

PARR’s services include: a 24-hour hotline; crisis intervention; individual and group counseling; in-person advocacy in area emergency rooms and during forensic exams; accompaniment at all stages of a legal proceeding; prevention programs; and trauma training for mental health professionals. As well, PARR has a long history of training law enforcement in how best to respond to sexual assault survivors.

PARR also reaches out to survivors who may be reluctant to disclose abuse at places where they feel comfortable. PARR has two full-time bi-lingual counselors to serve Pittsburgh’s growing Hispanic and Latino populations, where social isolation, lack of legal documentation, fear, discrimination, and lack of cultural competence often keep survivors in the shadows. And it also provides on-site services for survivors with cognitive or physical disabilities at the agencies where they may already be accessing services. This allows these survivors to receive help and information without having to disclose the details of their victimization before they are ready.

Survivors with substance abuse problems are also particularly vulnerable: not only are they deliberately targeted by perpetrators, they are often less likely to report an assault, and are less likely to be believed if they do. These survivors are often doubly stigmatized – by both the substance abuse and the sexual victimization – so in addition to direct services, PARR has created education and risk reduction programs to help stem the tide of this often unspoken-about violence.

Just one story. S was raped at a party, and no matter how many therapists she talked to, she for years blamed herself because she had been drinking. But thanks to PARR’s trauma-focused therapy, S for the first time has been able to understand that it was not her fault.

Honoring Texas Victims Austin, Texas

www.tcfv.org/our-work/honoring-texas-victims

In this annual report, the Texas Council on Family Violence profiles the women killed as a result of domestic violence in Texas. Each story tells the location, age, and relationship status of the victim, as well as the time and method of her murder. The report aims both to pay tribute to each life lost, and to identify larger trends and factors that contribute to domestic violence fatalities. The most recent report identified 114 women killed by their intimate partners in Texas, with counties with smaller populations experiencing greater per capita death rates than larger counties. No age group was exempt – the victims ranged from young girls to women over 60 – and 61 people witnessed the murders, 44 of them children. The report has become a mainstay among law enforcement, prosecutorial, and judicial communities, and has created a sense of urgency about domestic violence throughout the state. As the Council notes, the Report “holds tight to the idea that domestic violence murders are knowable, identifiable and predictable” – and thus, preventable.

HOPE Works
Burlington, Vermont
www.hopeworksvt.org

HOPE Works is Vermont’s largest rape crisis center, started in 1973 by a group of women who answered a nighttime hotline out of one woman’s living room. (The center uses the same number today.) Last year, the center provided counseling and advocacy for over 950 sexual assault survivors and their loved ones, and reached over 5000 people with prevention programs.

Over the past decade, VAWA money has helped HOPE Works specialize and grow on many fronts. Having once focused almost exclusively on immediate crisis counseling, the center now can provide ongoing, long-term support. Or, as Executive Director Cathleen Barkley puts it, “with VAWA funds, we are able to work with survivors every step of the way.”

The center also reaches many underserved, particularly vulnerable populations. It provides specialized services for male victims of sexual assault; has collaborated with Deaf Vermonters Advocacy Services to help better serve Deaf survivors; works with survivors who are incarcerated; and is partnering with the University of Vermont to better prevent and respond to sexual assault on campus. Working directly with students and youth, the center also developed a “chat line” to provide a more familiar and comfortable way for young people to reach for help.

HOPE Works also has specialized programs for homeless LGBTQ youth, runaway kids, and pregnant and parenting teens. To reach these groups, HOPE Works “goes where they are”: its advocates have a steady presence, among other places, at youth homeless centers and Camp Outright, a summer camp for kids who identify as LGBTQ. “Trust is a huge barrier for at-risk youth,” notes Barkley, and so center advocates invest time in building rapport, relationships, and trust.

The Yolanda Project
Portland, Oregon
www.ywcapdx.org

The YWCA of Greater Portland transformed its shelter-based program into one which focuses on securing safe, affordable, long-term housing for survivors. The Project is named for the late Yolanda Panek, a YWCA program director who was brutally murdered by her ex-boyfriend in front of their 2-year-old son. Led by experienced professionals, including some who are themselves domestic violence survivors, the Project places advocates within the regional housing authority; Portland’s walk-in center for survivors and their children (The Gateway Center); and another neighborhood location. In its first year, the Project reached four times the number of clients it would have served at the shelter – getting them many needed services – and helped 240 survivors and their children find housing. The Project estimates that 112 of these families would have been homeless without the help.

Survivors of domestic violence often have a particularly hard time finding a home: in addition to Portland's tight housing market, many have eviction histories, destroyed credit, mental illness, or substance abuse problems. YWCA advocates help landlords understand the dynamics of domestic violence, and why it's not uncommon for survivors to be saddled with unpaid utility bills and property damaged at the hands of an abuser. Advocates also work with survivors to understand their housing rights – and how, for instance, they are entitled to move to the top of a waiting list when their safety, or their kids', is at risk. Says Yolanda's mother, Susan Panek: "In my heart I know that Yolanda's gift of caring for others will continue through Yolanda House."

Hope House, Inc.
Lee's Summit and Independence, Missouri
www.hopehouse.net

Within four hours of opening its doors in 1983, Hope House's first client entered shelter, and within four weeks, it was overflowing beyond capacity. That small home in Independence, which could then care for 15 women and children, has grown into Missouri's largest domestic violence shelter, housing some 122 women and children every night at its two campuses. It also has an onsite dental clinic and salon. Last year, Hope House answered nearly 5000 hotline calls (a 419% increase over the 949 it received its first year), and sheltered 734 women and 434 children.

With VAWA money, Hope House also provides an array of wraparound support, including transitional housing assistance; case management (with an emphasis on health, self-sufficiency, housing, and family issues); individual therapy, including for children; support groups and addiction counseling; safety planning; 24-hour on-call crisis intervention; civil legal representation; and supervised visitation and monitored exchanges of custody. Hope House also partnered with five local police departments to create a lethality assessment protocol, so those most at risk for deadly violence can receive proactive help – and its court advocacy program serves as a model for other shelters in the Kansas City area. Hope House assisted over 3000 survivors in its nonresidential programs last year and trained 1000 community professionals, including law enforcement officers, lawyers, medical personnel, clergy, and lay persons.

As Hope House CEO MaryAnne Metheny says, the organization "lives with a sense of optimism because we accomplish something remarkable every day. We have met survivors' needs in comprehensive, meaningful ways ... and inspired them to transform their lives. Our work is about giving hope."

Rape Victim Advocates
Chicago, Illinois
www.rapevictimadvocates.org

Rape Victim Advocates (RVA) works with sexual assault survivors from the moment they report an attack (at a hospital, to law enforcement, at the center itself), to "whatever the end of the journey

with us looks like for them,” according to Executive Director Sharmili Majmudar. RVA also provides on-site services – in schools or nursing homes, for example – for those who lack transportation, or who find it uncomfortable talking openly in an unfamiliar environment.

When a survivor reports at a hospital, RVA dispatches a trained staff member or volunteer to advocate for the survivor’s needs with nurses, doctors, law enforcement, and even well-meaning family and friends who may not understand the trauma associated with these crimes. Advocates explain a survivor’s options and next steps, ensure she has fresh clothes to go home in – “the last thing someone needs after a sexual assault is to deal with going home without underwear,” says Majmudar – provide transportation, safe temporary housing, if needed, or help with changing locks: “whatever we can do to help survivors feel as safe and secure as possible.”

RVA staff members remain at a survivor’s side – accompanying her to other medical appointments, to interviews with detectives and prosecutors and to court, and they also follow up on necessary medications, check the status of an evidence collection kit, help resolve medical billing issues, and provide counseling both to the survivor and her close emotional supporters. RVA also offers prevention programs for kids of all ages, and works with a number of Chicago-area colleges and universities to train police, students, and staff about the dynamics of sexual assault on campus.

As a component of RVA’s broad-based training efforts, it also used VAWA money to create a Medical Training Supplement for Medical Professionals – to ensure they have access to the best practice guidelines and information on care for sexual assault survivors. Before this Supplement, there was no one place that comprehensively collected these Illinois protocols, which include information on evidence collection, drug-facilitated assaults, follow-up care, rape trauma response, as well as trauma-informed techniques for working with survivors in a validating and compassionate way.

Just one story. “In the emergency room after my assault, I was asked if I wanted an advocate from RVA. [She] showed up within an hour and I am so glad she did! She talked me through an evidence collection kit [She] also explained the legal process, preparing me both for my talk with the beat officers ... and for my initial interview with a detective the following day. ... [S]he listened as I shared my story and made sure I received the care and services I needed. ... [A RAV counselor and legal advocate] guided me through my darkest moments and helped me start my healing journey. ... Without RVA, I would not have known about the legal options available and would not have had access to the trauma-informed counseling I received.”

Citizen Potawatomi Nation House of Hope Shawnee, Oklahoma

www.potawatomi.org/services/community/firelodge-children-and-family-services/house-of-hope

The House of Hope works with local shelters to connect women fleeing violence with counselors, financial assistance, transportation, and basic necessities, like household items and toiletries.

Program advocates also help victims develop safety plans, secure emergency protection orders, find legal representation for divorce and custody proceedings, and enroll in vocational and higher education programs. The House of Hope also offers free counseling with licensed domestic violence counselors. Recently, the group converted a two-car garage into a clothing closet – where clients “shop” for free professional attire to wear to job interviews, everyday clothes, children’s clothes, diapers, and personal hygiene products.

Says Program Coordinator Tiffany Barrett of House of Hope’s services: “We help put the tools in [survivors’] hands so they are more self-sufficient – so they don’t feel dependent on someone who is going to abuse them.”

Safe Connections

St. Louis, Missouri

www.safeconnections.org

Originally established in 1976 as a 24-hour crisis hotline, Safe Connections is now the largest counseling center for domestic and sexual violence survivors in the St. Louis area. To provide the highest quality counseling and therapy, the center hires master’s-level counselors via a rigorous selection process. “We constantly update and improve our counseling techniques and crisis helpline response protocols,” says Executive Director Susan Kidder. “Our goal is always to best support our clients by incorporating best practices and research findings from around the nation.”

The center’s counselors work to understand the vulnerabilities, or “triggers,” of trauma survivors, and facilitate healing in ways traditional counseling sites may not. One of its innovative practices, for example, involves using guided eye movements or tactile stimulation to re-train the brain to process traumatic memories and related disturbances in different ways. This therapy (EMDR) has been shown to be effective for survivors who are “stuck” or “frozen” by their traumatization – or who are so traumatized by the memory of a rape, for instance, that they can’t even begin to talk about it. Once survivors can process their trauma in less painful ways via this specialized therapy, they can develop coping mechanisms and start putting the pieces of their lives back together.

VAWA funds, says Kidder, make the Center’s expert counseling possible – which, for survivors, means fewer and less intense anxiety attacks, fewer and less major periods of depression, more good nights of sleep, fewer flashbacks, and a greater sense of safety, well-being, and productivity.

Safe Connections also runs programs for teen boys and girls on how to create healthy relationships, and how to take a stand when they see disrespectful, intimidating, or abusive behavior. Special “Guys Groups” involve young men as leaders, and also sponsor a “Purple Tie Day” – when men and boys wear special ties to signify their commitment to ending violence and disrespect toward women. In a typical year, Safe Connections serves about 16,000 clients through its counseling, support groups, crisis helpline, and prevention programming.

Just one story. S came to Safe Connections, severely depressed and scared, after years living with an abusive husband. She was physically unhealthy, isolated, and afraid to talk to anyone about what was happening at home. In Safe Connections support groups, she learned that she wasn't alone, and after a year of therapy with a Safe Connections counselor, she found work outside the home and created a detailed plan to leave her abuser and start a new life with her two girls. She also started running and eating right, and got down to a healthy weight. With her growing confidence, she decided to go to college – and now, years later, she is happily remarried and working as a successful professional counselor. She feels safe and loved.

Legal Aid Society
Louisville, Kentucky
www.laslou.org

The Louisville Legal Aid Society provides pro bono legal services to individuals whose incomes are at or below 125% of the federal poverty level. (Most of its clients, though, live well below the line.) Through its VAWA-funded Domestic Violence Advocacy Program, attorneys support and represent survivors in a variety of ways, whether it's to get a protection order (it has helped obtain 400 this year), dissolve a marriage, or secure child custody. The program also trains volunteers who help support survivors in these efforts. A recent study found that emergency protection orders, in addition to safeguarding victims and potential victims, have saved Kentucky some \$85 million in averted costs, like lost job productivity and health care expenses. As the state's VAWA grant administrator notes, without the assistance of a lawyer, "a victim is too often unclear of legal rights and is highly susceptible to the batterer's influence and control. If the victim is unrepresented at a hearing [for a protection order], it is more likely the important details of the case will not be revealed."

Blueprint for Domestic Violence Interventions
Austin, Texas
www.tcfv.org/stateplan

As the second most populous state, Texas faces a daunting challenge in allocating domestic violence service dollars effectively. The Blueprint, launched by the Texas Council on Family Violence, in collaboration with state agencies and the University of Texas Institute of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, surveys the availability of services across the state and compares it with Uniform Crime report data, the U.S. Census, and other metrics to identify where the needs of survivors are – and aren't – being met. The most recent survey found that certain underserved populations should be targeted for particular outreach, including survivors with limited English proficiency; those with substance abuse/mental illness; LGBTQ survivors; survivors in rural areas and Asian and African-American communities; and youth who experience or witness family or dating violence. The survey also found that living in a border county is a significant predictor of a person's need for family violence services, as is a lack of education and the age (20-24) of a

woman. The Blueprint helps state policymakers establish domestic violence priorities and get targeted, specialized services where they are needed most.

Cleveland Rape Crisis Center Cleveland, Ohio

www.clevelandrapecrisis.org

The Cleveland Rape Crisis Center is the largest in Ohio. Its 20 employees and more than 100 volunteers serve nearly 20,000 people annually, including via its 24-hour hotline, hospital and justice system advocacy, counseling, and school and community outreach programs. As with many organizations, the Center's provision of quality services with VAWA dollars serves to attract other private funding partners. In recent years, the Center has expanded its programming to neighboring communities and strengthened its partnerships with like-minded Asian-American, Latina, and LGBT organizations. Currently, some 47% of its clients are people of color, and 15% are men.

At the Mayor's request, the Center's CEO served on the Special Commission on the Investigation of Missing Persons and Sex Crimes, which led to significant changes in how police handle these cases. The Center also convened more than 50 law enforcement agencies to develop a model sexual assault response policy for the entire county. And more recently, it has been working to help reduce the backlog of untested rape kits in Cuyahoga County, including supporting survivors when their assailants are belatedly identified.

"We save people's lives here," says Sondra Miller, the Center's President and CEO. "Each person who walks out the doors who says, 'I am a healthier, happier person because of this program' is something to be proud of."

Advocacy Center of Tompkins County Ithaca, New York

www.theadvocacycenter.org

The Advocacy Center, formerly called the Task Force For Battered Women, provides comprehensive services – from shelter, crisis intervention, safety planning and legal advocacy, to support groups and empowerment classes – for adult, teen and child survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Last year, the Advocacy Center served 1,569 survivors, answered 2,055 hotline calls, and made 398 educational presentations to some 3,600 community members. Center employees also accompanied 32 victims to the local hospital for a forensic sexual assault exam.

According to Program Director Louise Miller, VAWA money has enabled the Center to provide in-depth training for law enforcement and to hire additional staff to focus on the legal advocacy needs of domestic violence survivors. And the Center makes a point of telling survivors that its

doors are always open. “It can sometimes be hard to ask for help,” its website says, “but you do not deserve to be abused.” “You do not need to wait for an emergency to ask for help,” and you “don’t have to figure it out alone. The Advocacy Center ... can help.”

**Loudoun Citizens for Social Justice, Inc./
Loudoun Abused Women’s Shelter
Leesburg, Virginia**
www.lcsj.org

In addition to shelter, a 24-hour crisis hotline, advocacy, and counseling for survivors, Loudoun Citizens for Social Justice, Inc./Loudoun Abused Women’s Shelter (LAWS) provides comprehensive services (including crisis intervention, counseling, support groups, and recreational activities) for children and teens who’ve been affected by domestic violence and sexual abuse. LAWS is also one of the first programs in Virginia to provide free legal services to domestic violence and sexual assault survivors. Its two full-time attorneys help an average of 300 survivors yearly, from securing protection orders, helping file criminal charges against an abuser, to representation in custody, divorce, and child support proceedings.

“The legal aspect of our work is the heartbeat of the program,” says Executive Director Nicole Acosta. “Many women lose everything if they do not have full legal representation in court.”

LAWS also operates a Supervised Visitation Center, which provides a safe and confidential environment for children and parents during court-ordered visitations. LAWS staff accompany the visiting parent, coordinate staggered arrival times, and observe all interactions to ensure everyone’s safety.

Just one story. S, a pregnant immigrant whose abusive husband also tried to cut her off from all family support, was referred to LAWS by her gynecologist. S had her baby at the LAWS shelter, and with the help of its lawyers, got a protection order, was awarded custody of the child, and was able to divorce her husband. She subsequently went back to school, received her MBA, and has a successful career. She even started her own nonprofit.

**Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Jackson, Mississippi**
www.mscasa.org

The Coalition represents Mississippi’s nine rape crisis centers, which serve survivors from every corner of the state, including women of color, migrant poultry workers, people with disabilities, adolescents, and survivors from rural communities. In collaboration with other state and federal partners, the Coalition has developed a standard model of care for sexual assault survivors – and in addition to providing statewide training and technical assistance to core responders (such as law

enforcement, medical personnel, sexual assault advocates, and prosecutors), it also reaches out more deeply. “It’s not just cops,” notes Coalition Executive Director Levette Kelly Johnson. “Faith leaders, barbers and stylists are confidants, and others in the community serve as jurors. It’s important that we train them as well to effectively respond.”

Also with VAWA funding and in collaboration with the University of Mississippi Medical Center and various hospitals around the state, the Coalition sponsors intensive training for registered nurses, nurse practitioners, nurse-midwives, and physicians in how to conduct forensic exams, collect evidence, and testify effectively in court. Three times a year, the Sexual Assault Nursing Examiner (SANE) program offers forty-hour training sessions, including photography, live-model skills labs, and mock trials.

So, too, the Coalition uses VAWA money to assist universities, including in the development of prevention programs, sexual assault policies, and disciplinary board protocols. VAWA funds also support the state Sexual Assault Response Teams, which typically bring together the SANE, police or sheriff, detective, prosecutor, rape crisis advocate or counselor, and emergency department medical personnel – and who aim, together, to meet the multiple needs of survivors and to catch and prosecute offenders. The Coalition has also developed a youth public awareness campaign (“Respect: Your Key To the Future”), targeting fifth and sixth graders, as well as a training program specifically geared toward nursing home employees, to help them identify and respond to signs of elder abuse and assault.

Southeast Tennessee Legal Services (STLS) **Chattanooga, Tennessee** www.selegal.org

Serving nine counties, this VAWA-funded program provides full legal representation to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking – from obtaining protection orders to securing divorces. The specialized STLS attorneys also serve as a survivor’s link to other services in the community, work closely with shelter partners, train law enforcement, and accompany survivors and their children to court proceedings, often serving as a barrier between them and their abuser. STLS lawyers also ensure that survivors’ voices are heard in broader community initiatives – serving on the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Family Justice Initiative and the local fatality review team, meeting with court staff and judges to discuss survivor safety, and, most recently, presenting to the Statewide Economic Council on Women. Since 2000, the program has assisted nearly 2000 domestic violence survivors.

The New Hanover County Rape Crisis Center of Coastal Horizons Center, Inc. Wilmington, North Carolina

www.supportrcc.org

Since its founding in 1985, the New Hanover County Rape Crisis Center has provided holistic services – from crisis intervention, therapy, and professional training – to help male and female sexual assault survivors recover and rebuild their lives. The Center is known for its creative outreach: it was one of the first, for example, to start training bar owners and bartenders about how alcohol is used in sexual assaults – and it also works with the prosecutor’s office to reach young women who’ve been abused and trafficked into prostitution.

Now, a new VAWA grant is supporting outreach to, and improved services for, survivors with physical or developmental disabilities. The project is a collaboration between the Center and Wilmington’s disAbility Resource Center: by conducting a joint needs assessment and training staff at both agencies, the goal is to ensure that the unique needs of survivors with disabilities are understood and met by both centers in all their work. This new capacity-building is already making headway: one Rape Crisis Center staff member recently noted how much he had learned about the extreme isolation experienced by survivors with disabilities – and, thanks to this program, he and the rest of the team will be putting their newfound knowledge into practice.

Just one story. When a 12-year-old sexual abuse victim, who is on the Autism spectrum, was brought to the police station by her grandparents, she hid under a desk and would not speak. A Rape Crisis Center advocate started working with her, and realized the child could speak but was overwhelmed by the situation. In time, and once the child felt more comfortable, she revealed that her father had sexually abused her. The Center advocate worked to have the child placed in the grandparents’ emergency custody, arranged for a child medical exam and forensic interview, and helped her mother obtain a protection order. The advocate is continuing to work with the family as the criminal case against the father proceeds.

Our House, Inc. Greenville, Mississippi

www.ourhousenewbirth.com

Our House is a dual sexual assault and domestic violence program that in the last twelve years has served over 800 domestic violence survivors through its shelter and outreach program; conducted over 200 workshops on domestic and sexual violence prevention; and held over 10 annual youth conferences, reaching 1,600-plus high school students every year. Its L.E.A.H. (Letting Each Affliction Heal) and S.A.R.A.H. (Sexual Assault Responders Advocating Healing) programs provide 24-hour crisis intervention, emergency room assistance, safety planning, help with crime victim compensation claims, court advocacy, and counseling. Our House also runs an intensive behavioral modification program for abusers. And “Let’s Talk About It” groups let young female sexual assault survivors (ages 6-18) work through their trauma with others who’ve had similar experiences.

Our House is also addressing teen violence in the African American community by enlisting and training teens and young adults (ages 13-24) to get their peers up-to-date information and let them know about culturally specific services available to them. Importantly, the program is comprised mainly of young men who are committed to ending violence against women. In collaboration with the Domestic Violence Project, Our House has additionally established a rural legal services program that provides civil-case representation to survivors in 19 counties in the Northern and Delta areas of Mississippi.

Executive Director Dr. Patricia Ann Davenport says Our House's key successes – including an improved partnership with law enforcement and district attorneys, and being able to let survivors stay in shelter for more than 30 days – wouldn't have been possible without VAWA.

Rose Brooks Center, Inc.

Kansas City, Missouri

www.rosebrooks.org

First and foremost, Rose Brooks Center provides emergency shelter to women and children escaping domestic violence – and once they are safe, it provides the tools and resources they need to rebuild their lives. With more than 35 years' experience, Rose Brooks is also the largest full continuum-of-care facility on one site in Missouri, providing: 100-bed emergency shelter; a 24-hour crisis line; a free-standing pet shelter; an on-site health clinic; extensive children's programming; full-time court advocacy; case management (for such vital needs as housing, transportation, childcare, and healthcare); employment workshops; individual counseling and support groups; and economic empowerment classes (to teach survivors how to identify economic abuse, and also about budgeting, credit, and other financial basics). Rose Brooks' housing program helps a survivor find an apartment, pay the rent, and reestablish good credit, an often indispensable step in the road to independence.

Rose Brooks Center has also created systematic changes in the Kansas City community. Project SAFE, a school-based program with an 18-year track record, has integrated a violence prevention curriculum into Jackson County schools. It also provides students dealing with violence at home or in their neighborhoods with in-school counseling, and trains educators to identify at-risk kids and connect them to the support services they may need. The Bridge Program provides hospital advocacy and training, and was at the forefront of the effort to create new protocols for screening patients for domestic violence in area hospitals. Rose Brooks Center also pioneered the area's lethality assessment program, which changed how the police respond to some 7000 domestic violence calls every year, adding a lethality questionnaire to each case.

Safe Harbors of the Finger Lakes
Geneva, New York
www.safeharborsfl.org

Among other services, Safe Harbors offers individual counseling (crisis and long-term), a 24-hour hotline, someone to accompany a survivor to family and criminal court proceedings, help getting protection orders, advocacy with other agencies, and emergency cell phones that directly dial 911. Safe Harbors also makes a point of reaching out to particularly underserved populations in the three counties it serves, including women in county jails, in substance abuse treatment facilities, and in mental health service residences – and it also runs a support group for survivors of clergy abuse, “women’s circle” support groups, a “Boys Council” that challenges stereotypical notions about what it means to be a “real boy” or a “real man,” and “Girls Circle,” designed to increase strength and competence in girls. Safe Harbor’s age-appropriate personal safety presentation is given to every K-6 student in the area. The organization’s website is full of practical, detailed advice – including a step-by-step guide to creating a personalized safety plan, and instructions on how to ensure that an abuser cannot see what websites have been viewed on the home computer.

Safe Passage, Inc.
Southeast Indiana
www.safepassageinc.org/index.htm

Safe Passage is the sole provider of services for domestic violence survivors throughout 1500 square miles of Southeast Indiana. The region’s small towns are scattered over the region, which also has few substantial businesses and limited human and financial resources. Before creation of Safe Passage in 1997 (around a kitchen table), survivors of domestic violence here had almost no place to turn. Thanks to VAWA funding, Safe Passage was, and is, able to provide comprehensive services: in addition to shelter (which includes child-friendly spaces, activities, and therapies), it offers counseling, case management, court accompaniment and legal advocacy, employment and housing assistance, and support groups. As one particularly noteworthy measure of its success: only 8% of Safe Passage’s shelter clients return to their abusive situations.

Safe Passage advocates also provide training to law enforcement officers in five counties on the Lethality Assessment Program – to screen victims for risk of potentially lethal future violence, and to get them appropriate help. A VAWA-funded outreach coordinator also spends time out in the communities, face-to-face with clients and holding nearly 200 meetings a year.

In another, more personal measure of Safe Passage’s success: some 10 years ago, a young woman came to the shelter with her three small children after a brutal assault. With Safe Passage’s help and support, she went onto college and embarked on a successful career in graphic design. She later opened an art gallery next to the shelter, and provides free art classes to any Safe Passage client. Her daughter, meanwhile, is an active member of the group’s Youth Council, and advocates against teen dating violence throughout southeast Indiana. As Safe Passage itself puts it, S is a “beacon of hope to every survivor” in the area.

Sexual Assault Resource & Counseling Center Lebanon and Schuylkill Counties, Pennsylvania

www.sarcclebanon.org

The Sexual Assault Resource & Counseling Center provides a 24-hour hotline, bi-lingual crisis intervention and counseling, medical and legal accompaniments, referrals, education programs in schools and civic organizations, and professional education to improve trauma-informed care for sexual assault survivors. In Lebanon and Schuylkill counties, it served nearly 1000 clients last year, for a total of some 4500 service hours.

Also last year, the Center launched the “Live Green Dot” campaign, which gives participants tools, such as safe bystander intervention strategies, to become proactive ambassadors in the effort to end violence against women. As a result of this project, the Center is also helping to establish Lebanon Valley College as a “Violence Free Zone” this year. The Center is not afraid to use humor to enlist men in the cause: at its “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes” event, men and women walk down main street in high heels on a very hot August night – but they are also educated about the serious causes and effects of sexual violence.

The Center also works to reach underserved populations: it provides individual and group counseling in prisons; its advocates are trained to help serve developmentally or cognitively delayed survivors; it provides training to military personnel across the state; it has LGBTQ-identified staff to provide counseling and advocacy for this community; it developed specific outreach materials and public service announcements to help Latinos recognize and report sexual violence; and it has steadily increased its provision of services to male survivors.

Just a small snapshot of the Center’s work came from one of its recent clients. “I’m a 10-year-old boy,” he wrote, “and I think it’s really awesome here and you helped me a lot.” And according to the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, the Center “has been changing hearts and minds with limited resources for decades” – and “VAWA’s increased focus on sexual assault and diversity has been a boon for these programs that do so much with so little.”

The Shafer Center for Crisis Intervention Hattiesburg, Mississippi

www.thshafercenter.info

In the early 1980s, a series of sexual assaults by the “West Side Rapist” near the University of Southern Mississippi prompted a grassroots call for action. The Shafer Center (originally Hattiesburg Rape Crisis Center) began in 1983 as a red phone in a counseling center on the University campus, but has since grown into the regional rape crisis center for eleven counties in Southeast Mississippi – providing a 24-hour crisis line, counseling, and escorts for survivors to hospitals, police departments and court proceedings. Its main office is still uniquely located on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi, allowing it to directly serve and advocate for students in their own back yard. Given its experience, the Shafer Center has also helped get

other rape crisis centers off the ground, and has provided training and assistance to budding programs in Meridian, Oxford, and Natchez. VAWA funding has also been instrumental in the Center's expansion into rural communities: it hired a master's degree-level counselor, and opened a second outreach office in Laurel, Mississippi, which provides more accessible services to rural survivors. Also, reports Director Kim Newell, the Center has "a much better partnership with law enforcement and prosecutors" than it did 20 years ago, as a direct result of VAWA-funded positions in those agencies.

Shelter, Inc.

Alpena, Michigan

www.shelterincalpena.org

Shelter, Inc. provides comprehensive services to domestic and sexual violence survivors in five rural counties in northern Michigan, covering over 3000 square miles. It is also engaged in a number of innovative projects with several of the communities it serves. In Alpena County, for instance, Shelter, Inc. partnered with the city police to evaluate law enforcement policies and practices – covering everything from the effectiveness of first responders, reporting protocols, police write-ups of complaints, and prosecution outcomes – as well as Shelter Inc.'s own provision of services in the area. As a result of the effort, a number of new survivor-centered changes are in the works (making it easier, for example, to get a copy of an incident report), and officers now also make a multi-point safety assessment every time they respond to a domestic violence call. This working group has evolved into a full-fledged Coordinated Community Response Team, which has been recently joined by the prosecuting attorney's office and its victim advocate. Next steps include bringing the revised best practices to other Alpena County law enforcement agencies, piloting new 911 operations, and, eventually, forming similar Response Teams in all five counties.

Just one story. S, a young mother of two with another on the way, had been verbally and physically abused by her husband for years. She was finally able to leave him when her youngest child was diagnosed with leukemia. She was homeless, unemployed, had no income, and came to Shelter, Inc. with nothing other than the clothes she and the kids were wearing and a dilapidated car. After two years of intensive help from Shelter, Inc., her future looks bright: her baby was born healthy, her son's course of chemotherapy was successful, her oldest is thriving in school, and she got a divorce. Perhaps most impressively, S has completed all requirements to begin a local nursing program, and has set her sights on the pediatric oncology department at the University of Michigan, where she spent so many hours over the last two years. In addition to its many supports, Shelter, Inc., also helped S obtain housing, so she can continue down her new path without fear of being homeless again.

Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Montpelier, VT

www.vtnetwork.org

The Vermont Network is an information and support conduit for its fourteen member organizations and beyond: it brings best practices, research and ideas from other states to Vermont and, conversely, exports Vermont's lessons and wisdom to its state and national partners. The Network provides training to a variety of stakeholders (reaching over 1000 a year); offers a broad array of technical assistance (an average of 4000 sessions annually, including over 300 site visits); engages in public policy advocacy, and helps its members build capacity. The Network takes the concept of "coalition" particularly seriously: it regularly sits with its member programs to discuss the emerging issues of the day, evaluate current practices, and devise ever better ways to serve survivors. And in addition to its own professional staff, it contracts with outside specialists who work on particular projects.

Among the many other ways the Network has put VAWA funds to use: it has helped develop survivor-centric policies for service providers within the Vermont Agency of Human Services; it has worked with the Vermont housing community to help them understand the needs of, and special challenges faced by, survivors; it has developed new data collection systems for its member programs so they can better understand the people they serve; it has developed a strategic plan for reducing domestic violence homicides in Vermont; and it has trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, law enforcement officers, legislative advocates, children's advocates, and social workers who investigate child abuse.

The Network also has a special relationship with Deaf Vermonters Advocacy Services, which operates under the Network's auspices, to better serve Deaf or hard of hearing survivors. It also uses VAWA funds to target families in the most rural counties of northern Vermont. In collaboration with other partners, this program has specialized social workers and children's advocates who help non-abusive parents via home visits, art and writing activities, and more typical advocacy. The project, says Network Executive Director Karen Trongsard-Scott, "has given survivors and their children real tools for change."

Wise Women Gathering Place

Green Bay, Wisconsin

www.wisewomengp.org

Wise Women Gathering Place (WWGP) began in 1992 with women, kids in tow, meeting around a kitchen table to learn midwifery. It has since expanded to provide a variety of services, such as safe and stable transitional homes for survivors; Wise Youth Groups that take on painful issues like dating violence, teen pregnancy, suicide, and alcohol and drug abuse; sexual assault survivors' groups ("The Way You Dress Does Not Mean Yes," reads a banner on its website); and Rock & Rest, which offers rocking chairs, changing tables, nursing areas, and cribs at area festivals, so

parents can quietly care for their children while learning about WWGP's many programs and resources.

With VAWA money, WWGP also serves Native American survivors who don't typically access mainstream services. For instance, in collaboration with the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin, WWGP provides transitional housing for Native American families fleeing domestic violence, as well as culturally-sensitive healing services to help survivors rebuild their lives and find healthy relationships. WWGP also created the Discovery Dating curriculum, a healthy relationship tool that helps youth and adults clarify values, recognize character traits in others, and practice positive decision-making. WWGP is also working to expand its reach to help survivors of sex trafficking.

The Women's Center, Inc.: Rape Crisis Services, Williamson County Satellite Marion, Illinois

www.thewomensctr.org

Founded in 1972, the Women's Center is one of the oldest organizations serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence in the country. With VAWA money, it maintains a satellite office in rural Williamson County where, among other services, it provides legal advocacy, help obtaining protection orders, and support through legal proceedings. The Office also offers a "Trauma Recovery & Empowerment" counseling group for women who've been sexually assaulted – and for the past three years, has held an annual "Responding to Sexual Violence" training day to help police officers, teachers, and local counselors and advocates respond to survivors in more informed, compassionate, and resourceful ways. Participants learn about Rape Trauma Syndrome and how it affects different groups; crisis intervention skills; ways to address cultural attitudes that contribute to sexual violence; and about resources and services available in Southern Illinois.

Just one story. A 34-year old woman, who is developmentally delayed, was repeatedly sexually assaulted by a county bus driver; instead of taking her to her independent-living home, he drove her to secluded areas or to his house to assault her. He also tormented her to stay silent, leaving S terrified, confused, anxious, humiliated and severely depressed. Fortunately, she did come forward – and Rape Crisis Services has been helping her at every step of what will plainly be a long road to recovery, including helping prepare a victim impact statement for the upcoming criminal case against her assailant. After seven months of counseling and therapy (including S's favorite, sand tray play therapy), she is now able to smile and laugh, is sleeping better at night, has gained her appetite back, and can enjoy daily activities again.

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Tallahassee, Florida

www.fcadv.org

The Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) is unique among state coalitions in that it administers VAWA grant programs throughout the state. This structure allows FCADV to focus on the most critical issues facing survivors and to direct funding to meet these needs. A few examples of FCADV's vital VAWA-funded work:

Rural Statewide Initiative

Using a community-organizing model, this Initiative provides safety for the most geographically isolated survivors in rural areas of Florida. Established in 1996, the Initiative brought domestic violence and sexual assault outreach services to 19 rural counties where none existed. Using VAWA STOP funds as seed money, local domestic violence advocates identify leaders in their communities, establish task forces, and build support to begin providing services. This community-organizing model works: the 19 original counties no longer rely on VAWA funding to provide ongoing services, and the Initiative is now expanding to four additional communities where the need is urgent. As part of the Initiative, FCADV hosts a Rural Statewide Training Institute, which attracts service providers throughout the state who work with rural survivors of domestic violence, including child welfare professionals, victim advocates, law enforcement officers, and health professionals. FCADV recently launched an online Rural Resource Center that highlights information about rural-specific projects, resources, and news. FCADV trains nationally on its community-organizing model and is recognized as a leader in rural services and outreach.

Comprehensive Mental Health Services

Starting in 2009, FCADV has held a series of annual listening sessions with domestic violence survivors. Many expressed the need for mental health counseling in addition to immediate crisis intervention and support. In response, FCADV created a new initiative that brings domestic violence programs and mental health providers together to provide comprehensive services for survivors who request them. Using VAWA STOP grants, FCADV funds two local partnerships to provide empowerment-based and trauma-informed mental health programs. One supports a licensed therapist who offers survivors mental health counseling at the domestic violence center. The other has produced a strategic plan for the community to address the intersection of domestic violence and mental health. The projects seek to improve access to mental health services for survivors living with mental health challenges, and also to give mental health providers a deeper understanding of how abusers can use a diagnosis to maintain power and control.

Palm Beach Anti-Stalking Collaborative

Stalking is an underreported and often unaddressed crime. FCADV is changing that in Palm Beach County by funding Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA) and the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County to create a multi-disciplinary, coordinated community response to stalking. To help identify stalking victims and see that they seamlessly receive services, the team created community-specific resources such as law enforcement palm cards, brochures, and an Anti-Stalking Toolkit, which provides practical guidance to assist stalking victims and hold stalkers

accountable. Members of the Collaborative work together to enhance services to victims and improve the criminal justice response to stalking in Palm Beach County. VAWA STOP funds support this important initiative.

Intimate Violence Enhanced Service Team (InVEST)

FCADV and the Florida Attorney General's office created InVEST in 2009 to prevent domestic violence homicides in Florida. After identifying 13 communities with the highest homicide rates, FCADV provided funding for the creation of coordinated community response teams in these areas. The program serves more than 3,000 survivors each year who are at high risk for being murdered by their intimate partners. Since the program's inception, none of the InVEST participants has been killed – a particularly notable success, given that survivors in the program are at such high risk for homicide.

Here is how it works. Each day, advocates and law enforcement agencies jointly review police reports to identify high-risk domestic violence cases. Survivors are contacted to ask if they are interested in participating in the program. The team then screens survivors for additional risk factors and immediately connects them with services. At the same time, law enforcement agencies closely monitor offenders and, in some circumstances, hold them in custody.

FCADV trains all partners involved in the project, including domestic violence advocates, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, and parole/probation officers. InVEST's training for criminal justice partners focuses on the use of evidence-based investigations and prosecutions of domestic violence perpetrators; an abbreviated risk assessment tool; and survivor-centered practices to connect survivors and their children to domestic violence services. This important effort is funded through the VAWA STOP grant program.

Improving Access to Justice for Immigrant Survivors

FCADV has developed survivor-focused, culturally-informed resources such as the "Improving Access to Justice for Immigrant Survivors" collection. "Improving Access" includes an eight-hour training curriculum, a service provider handbook, and educational videos developed in collaboration with Voices for Immigrant Defense & Advocacy (VIDA) Legal Assistance. Developed in collaboration with immigrant survivors and allied organizations that provide services to immigrant and farmworker women, these resources provide important information about the gaps in services these women face. Resources are available in Creole, Spanish and English, and in an accessible format. The collection helps service providers identify system barriers to justice for immigrant survivors, and helps training participants recognize the implications of survivors' immigration status for criminal cases. Since FCADV and VIDA began conducting these trainings two years ago, the collaborative partners have been in high demand to provide training and technical assistance across the state. This program is funded by a VAWA STOP grant.

The Wellspring Alliance for Families
Monroe, Louisiana
www.wellspringalliance.org

The Wellspring Alliance is among the first VAWA-funded Family Justice Centers in the nation, offering a “one-stop shop” for domestic violence survivors. Under one roof, a survivor can find all manner of immediate help – from shelter, crisis intervention, food and clothing, counseling, transitional housing, help filing a police report or getting a lawyer – as well as longer-term services. Wellspring also uses VAWA funds to “meet victims where they are,” in the words of program director Valerie Bowman, so they don’t need to relocate or travel great distances to get what they need. Wellspring serves 12 parishes, mostly rural, which include three of the poorest communities in America, and it also provides support services for survivors of intimate partner violence on nearby college campuses. The organizations that are part of Wellspring convene quarterly, and notwithstanding the sometimes desperate environment in which they work, strive together to provide ever better services for domestic violence survivors. Says Beth Meeks, the Executive Director of the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the “cross-discipline collaboration” offered by Wellspring “is the strongest I have ever seen in my more than 20 years in the field.”

YWCA of West Central Michigan
Grand Rapids, Michigan
www.ywcawcmi.org

The YWCA operates a 24-hour confidential hotline and, in addition to emergency shelter, provides transitional and permanent housing (55 apartments and 15 duplexes) for survivors and their dependent children fleeing domestic violence. Trained staff and volunteers also help survivors develop safe escape strategies, provide counseling (including for batterers who want to stop their abusive behavior), and connect survivors with legal, medical, housing, and child care services.

The YWCA established the first Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program in the state – providing comprehensive and sensitive medical forensic examinations for sexual assault survivors – as well as the first regional SANE program to reach rural areas. The YWCA’s nurse examiners publish research on sexual and domestic violence in Michigan, and have inspired (and provide training for) other SANE programs across the state. On one day, the YWCA’s SANE program saw a three-year old in the morning and a 94-year- old in the afternoon – showing, as CEO Caroline Blinkhorn notes, that “this is a problem across the board.”

Through Girls Inc. at the YWCA, the agency offers programs for 6-18-year-old girls in developing self-esteem, setting boundaries, fostering healthy relationships, and resisting drugs. And its WEAVE program (Working to End Assault and Violence for Everyone) provides residential programs and services for survivors with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

National Resource Sharing Project

www.resourcesharingproject.org

Before VAWA, a number of states didn't have sexual assault coalitions, which serve as membership associations for local service providers, and which also often advocate for changes in state laws, policies, and services for survivors. Today, every state and territory has a coalition, and there are nearly 1300 rape crisis centers across the country.

The National Resource Sharing Project was created in 1997 to serve the coalitions: to connect experienced ones with their newly-formed counterparts; to provide technical assistance, proactive and reactive, electronic and face-to-face; to help with organizational and professional development; to hold skill-building meetings (*e.g.*, "Train the Trainers") and conferences where advocates talk about best practices, learn about cutting-edge research, discuss pressing issues (like the rape kit backlog, sex offender management, and the needs of rural survivors), and exchange wisdom and experiences.

The Project also conducts its own research into the most promising ways, be it traditional core services or emerging prototypes, to help sexual assault survivors cope and heal. The Project is led by the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault in partnership with the North Carolina and Washington Coalitions. Says Project Associate Coordinator Kris Bein: "Our work is about helping coalitions be strong sustainable vibrant organizations." And advocates, she noted, especially benefit from having a ready connection to each other. "This work is so isolating. Having time to be with peers doing the same work is the way we learn and do better work for survivors."

Reaching Specific Communities

Voces Latinas

Jackson Heights, New York

www.voceslatinas.org

Voces Latinas serves immigrant Latinas who are living with HIV or are survivors of domestic violence, connecting them with critical services such as housing, orders of protection, and mental health and medical care. Its VAWA-funded "Promotoras" program is its jewel: women who themselves are survivors or HIV-infected reach out to the most vulnerable of their sisters – sex workers, patrons, street prostitutes – to help them get medical care, HIV testing, gynecological exams, mammograms, and other services (like support groups and counseling) that would otherwise be out of reach. The Voces-trained promotoras work late into the night in Queens, and the group has also built relationships with non-traditional partners – including over 40 bars and

clubs – so promotoras can connect with sex workers and other women who typically are afraid to seek help. Outreach staff also maintain close ties with the community, conducting workshops, partnering with local businesses to provide resources, and presenting at conferences to raise awareness about this underserved and fearful population.

“Promotoras are the heart of Voces,” says Executive Director Nathaly Rubio-Torio. “The most important piece is that we are reaching a community that has very limited resources.” Last year, Promotoras started a cooperative thrift shop – which is owned, managed, and run by survivors – to help provide economic independence for women wanting to get out of sex work or who are in abusive relationships. The cooperative currently has ten members, and is bringing in \$2000 a month.

Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans Carson City, Nevada

www.varn.org

Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans (VARN) provides legal services to domestic violence survivors in small, rural communities in a sprawling 90,000 square-mile area. Many of these towns have low literacy rates and high levels of unemployment and poverty, and survivors, including undocumented immigrant women, are among the most isolated and endangered in the state.

VARN’s VAWA-funded Domestic Violence Victims Assistance Project covers the legal landscape – from securing protection orders, to representing survivors in all manner of family law proceedings (custody, divorce, termination of parental rights, guardianship), helping create and carry out safety plans, making lethality assessments, and referring clients to shelters and other crucial services. “Legal remedies are extremely important in helping someone escape a violent relationship,” notes Executive Director Ben Alders. “The court system can be a tool for the perpetrator.” More recently, VARN established its Domestic Violence Rural Immigrant Integration Project, which represents undocumented survivors in immigration proceedings, including to obtain legal status through the self-petition, or U-Visa, process.

A few testimonials from past clients:

- “[Without] your services I would never have been able to get a divorce. Now I am free of a bad abusive husband – closure to a lousy life, opening up a new better one.”
- “I have little money and worried about my safety and my kids. I now don’t worry and am able to exhale the breath I have held for a year.”
- “There are a lot of women who are in horrible situations that cannot afford to go to court or are too scared to leave their partners. ... VARN saves and changes lives. My attorney gave me hope in one of the most difficult situations of my life. ... She helped me get out

of a nasty situation in which myself and my daughter were homeless and terrified. She fought for my custodial privileges, a restraining order, and for me to leave the state with my daughter. If it weren't for here, I am not sure where I would be today.”

- “VARN was the answer to our prayers. We have guardianship of [child] and we can get medical care and testing at school. She feels safe and stable.”
- “Thank you for saving my life!

Hispanic Resource Center: Voz Y Vida Program **Mamaroneck, New York** www.hrclm.org/socialservices.html

The Hispanic Resource Center provides bi-lingual services and programs that focus on education, social services, and employment for new immigrant families. Over time, the Center found that most survivors came to the agency for English classes or employment assistance – but would not have walked into a domestic violence or sexual assault service office. Many did not identify as “victims” and were not in a position to leave their abusers, given, among other things, their lack of English proficiency or immigration status.

Thus evolved Voz Y Vida, which provides services rooted in the immigrant experience, including crisis intervention; advocacy/case management; safety planning; help with housing, translation, and protection orders; and medical and legal referrals. The program also provides culturally competent individual therapy, support groups, adult literacy classes, and job training. It runs a Women’s Leadership Institute (Comadres) that works with women who are often dually victimized by both domestic violence and sexual abuse, including survivors who have been raped in migration, sexually abused as children, and/or raped in their marriages, frequently in addition to other physical, emotional, and financial abuse.

“In providing services, we take into account survivors’ faiths, values, connection to their families, and economic realities, among other factors,” says Executive Director Zoe Colon. “It’s important that we meet people ‘where they are’ and allow survivors to make choices that best meet the needs and readiness of their families.”

Just one story. S had a long history of childhood abuse at the hands of family members. She married early and fled her country – and as a young mother, took a job despite her family’s objections to working women. Her husband was emotionally and physically abusive for years, and S decided to leave for the sake of her three-year-old daughter. Her husband refused to help support the little girl, which meant S had to double her hours at work to make ends meet. After a year’s separation, the ex-husband successfully filed for custody of their child, claiming she was an unfit mother because she worked too many hours. A Voz Y Vida advocate helped S gain confidence and develop a plan to get her daughter back. The advocate also quickly learned that

S's lawyer could not read the Spanish documents in her file, including a protection order. Once the attorney started to work with the Voz Y Vida advocate, and the judge was made to see the long history of the ex-husband's abuse, the case took a very different turn – and S was granted full custody. S continues to be involved with Voz Y Vida, including as part of the Comadres leadership program.

Asian Family Support Services of Austin

Austin, Texas

www.afssaustin.org

A dual domestic violence-sexual assault program, Asian Family Support Services of Austin (AFSSA) primarily serves Asian survivors of domestic and sexual violence. The need for culturally and linguistically-specific services in this community is critical: cultural taboos prevent many from getting help, and the threat of deportation and/or the lack of economic independence traps many others in abusive situations. AFSSA provides both crisis and longer term services – including counseling, legal advocacy, transportation, help finding housing and jobs – and partners with other groups to provide cultural and language support (in over 35 Asian languages), including interpreters. AFSSA is also reaching out to Austin's growing refugee communities, including from Iraq, Syria and Bhutan, addressing emerging trends (like forced marriage), and finding and training local leaders to spread the word about AFSSA's work.

A recent survey of 59 Asian survivors in a mainstream Austin shelter shows what a difference AFSSA's help can make: the 20 who worked with AFSSA received some 1,815 median hours of services, as compared to only 4.5 hours for the 39 others who did not have AFSSA's culturally-specific guidance.

AFSSA Executive Director Linda Phan says VAWA funding has been “a lifesaver” for the organization, which is also using the landmark provisions in VAWA 2013 to alter the immigration status of abused and/or trafficked survivors, so they don't have to depend on their abusers to stay here.

Just one story. S came to this country, full of hope for a new life, with her husband and his family. But she quickly learned that was not to be: she was required to cook all meals for the large extended family, but was herself made to eat on the floor, in the corner of the dining room. She was isolated in the house and not allowed to drive; the family eavesdropped on her conversations with her parents back in India – and they collectively abused her both emotionally and physically. A difficult pregnancy did not improve the situation, and she was additionally forced to work as a dishwasher at a restaurant. Although she hoped that would at least give her some money of her own, S's husband confiscated all her paychecks. S wanted to get a job in keeping with her talents (she has an accounting degree from India) – but her husband refused to let her see her immigration papers. After S's father called from abroad to intervene, S's husband threatened her with a butcher knife.

Fearing for her life, S fled – and was referred to AFSSA by the police. AFSSA helped S and her daughter find shelter, develop a safety plan, get a protection order, and also come up with a longer term strategy for her legal and immigration needs. Thanks to the new immigration recourses in VAWA, S was eligible to self-petition for lawful status. She is now living on her own with her daughter, has an accounting job, has learned to drive, and bought her own car. As Phan says, because of VAWA (both the law and its funded AFSSA advocate), S was “able to escape the daily torture and establish a safe and independent life.”

Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling: Boone and Ogle County Satellites Rockford, Illinois

www.icasa.org

Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling (RSAC) provides 24-hour crisis intervention and counseling for survivors of sexual assault and abuse of all ages. Since 1997, VAWA funds have allowed it to operate satellite offices in Boone and rural Ogle counties. According to Executive Director Maureen Mostacci, having a physical presence in these smaller communities “turned things around,” allowing RSAC to reach survivors unwilling or unable to travel to neighboring counties for help – and also to advocate on their behalf with law enforcement and at the local hospital. Rather than wait for clients to come to her, Sexual Assault Advocate Laura Basso drives around the spread-out county – seeing kids at schools, setting up a small meeting space in a church, or opening the doors of a local town office, “so people can just come in and talk.”

RSAC believes that survivors’ family members often need counseling, too. Sexual assault, says Mostacci, “is not a crime against one person, and “it’s important to give family members and partners the tools to provide effective support.”

At first, county schools resisted RSAC’s efforts to bring prevention programs to their students and teachers – but now, RSAC provides up to 200 hours of awareness and prevention education every year in both counties. Teachers are trained to recognize signs of abuse and to better understand the behavioral difficulties of abused kids, and students are being empowered to come forward with their stories. “In one day of presentations,” reports Mostacci, “we learned about four children and were able to get them out of abusive situations.” She’s gladdened that kids are increasingly coming forward: not only does it show that they see what happened to them as wrong (and that they are not to blame), it gives RSAC a chance to help them earlier.

Just one story. A family whose children had been sexually abused by an uncle was also struggling financially: they didn’t have money for rent, much less gas to drive the children to a counselor. One of the sisters was unable to even stay in class; she’d crawl under the desk and start screaming, or just run out of school. RSAC met the family at a church near their home and, in addition to counseling, helped them get some bills paid and find better housing. As for the sister, RSAC helped set up supports at the school, and with counseling, she now can concentrate in class and not act out. The older abused sister has also been able to work through her anger and shame.

None of this probably would have happened, believes Basso, had RSAC not been able to get out to the community. The uncle, meanwhile, is in prison.

Caminar Latino
Atlanta, Georgia
www.caminarlatino.org

Caminar Latino is the first and only comprehensive domestic violence program for Latino families in Georgia. VAWA money helps the organization provide both basic and longer-term services to Latina survivors, including trauma and mental health counseling, education classes, financial aid, and assistance with immigration applications. The voices of women has guided its mission from the start: in response to requests, Caminar Latino created a comprehensive children’s program to address the effects of domestic violence on the children who witness it; developed a 24-week, state-certified, violence intervention program for men; and provides childcare for kids while their parents attend parenting programs.

Executive Director Jessica Nuna says VAWA funds have allowed Caminar Latino to “address domestic violence in a way that works with the community.”

Here, just a few reflections from kids and women who have been served:

- “[Caminar Latino] helped me get new friends. I learned that what happened was not my fault.”
- “They have helped me to value myself as the person I am.”
- “In Caminar Latino I learned what violence is. I didn’t know before; I thought it was normal for my ex to beat me up. I am very proud that I no longer suffer from domestic violence now or ever. Thanks to Caminar Latino I am another woman.”
- “[Caminar Latino] offered safety for my children and me. They gave support to my partner so he could learn how we can live together without violence. This nurtures my children so they can grow up without violence. I don’t feel like a victim anymore. I feel like a survivor.”

Seminole Nation of Oklahoma: Domestic Violence Program
Seminole County, Oklahoma
www.sno-nsn.gov/services/dv

This program operates one of three tribally-run shelters in Oklahoma. It began with just two staff members and a VAWA grant, but by 2008 had become an eight-unit shelter (complete with panic

buttons and a safe room to guard against intruders) staffed by an around-the-clock advocate. Along with emergency housing and crisis counseling, the shelter provides food, toiletries, clothing and other supplies for survivors who may have fled with no belongings. Advocates also provide transportation to court and medical appointments, safety planning, help obtaining protection orders, and rent and utility assistance. The program works one-on-one with survivors to set small, obtainable goals so they can gain a sense of independence from their abusers – and then, with time, moves to larger goals, like regaining custody of a child, completing an education, or finding a new home.

Native women are disproportionately victimized by domestic violence, and this program's culturally sensitive services aim to better serve these survivors. As Acting Director Terri Stone explains, talking about physical or sexual abuse is already difficult – but having an advocate who can speak in a victim's native tongue or understand her tribe's customs can mean the difference between coming forward and staying silent.

Just one story. X first came to the shelter pregnant with her abuser's child. She was counseled, tried to leave, but then returned to him time and again. Friends and family lost faith that she'd be able to leave this violent man, but shelter advocates, though fearful every time she went back, remained supportive. One day, X left for good – and told the staff: “if it weren't for all of you accepting me every time I came back, and not making me feel that I would never break free, I wouldn't have been able to do it.” Today, X is healthy and happy, and embarking on a bright, violence-free life.

Kansas City Anti-Violence Project

Kansas City, Missouri

www.kcavp.org

The Kansas City Anti-Violence Project (KCAVP) is the only LGBTQ-specific domestic and sexual violence service provider in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, or Nebraska. In recent years, as community attitudes have evolved, organizations in the region have been more receptive to KCAVP's trainings on culturally-specific best practices for LGBTQ survivors. So, too, KCAVP has developed new community partnerships so survivors, including of hate crimes, have more places to turn for help. Each year, its small program staff of four helps over 200 LGBTQ survivors find vital resources, and also provides direct advocacy, a 24-hour crisis line, and often life-saving therapies. KCAVP's outreach staff additionally trains over 500 service professionals in 150 workshops throughout the region.

In one of its most notable collaborations of recent years, KCAVP has built a strong working relationship with (and changed not a few attitudes within) the Kansas City Police Department. Thanks to KCAVP's efforts, and in tandem with the Chief of Police and Board of Commissioners, the Department now has an LGBT liaison, who has helped make an historically unwelcoming criminal justice system fairer and more responsive to LGBTQ survivors. The liaison also makes reporting acts of violence more accessible and less intimidating. KCAVP also regularly trains new

police recruits, and last year trained the entire Kansas City force. It also co-leads a community task force with law enforcement to further mend and fortify this relationship. KCAVP reports that after struggling for 10 years to keep its doors open, and with VAWA's help, it is now on sound financial and programmatic footing.

Arab-American Family Support Center **New York, New York** www.aafscny.org

The Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC) is the first and largest Arabic-speaking social service agency in New York City, providing culturally, linguistically, and religiously sensitive services to immigrant communities throughout the five boroughs. Like many Asian programs that start with a focus on a particular population, the Center's work with West Asians has expanded to include South Asians, Tibetans, and Nepalese. With VAWA funding, the Center has added anti-violence initiatives to its programs, including a forum for Muslim Arab youth to talk about teen dating and violence. This program – which gives many kids a first-ever place to discuss such issues as sexuality, forced marriage, assault, and gender norms – has been replicated in a number of schools, and includes AAFSC's 12-session healthy relationships curriculum. When a girl's group about dating violence gained popularity, a group of boys asked the Center for a counterpart program of their own.

The Center is also using VAWA money to reach universities. A number of Arab students come from families whose cultural practices preclude any discussion about sexuality or dating safety, making young university students particularly at risk for sexual violence. The Center has also hired a male advocate to bring its anti-violence-against-women message to mosques and churches, and to enlist other men and leaders to question ingrained ideas and join the effort.

Just one story. Although S was a successful businesswoman in her native country, an abusive partner here left her drained of confidence and independence. AAFSC worked with S to develop a safety plan and, among other things, helped her see that filing for a divorce wasn't a mark of failure. She moved out and, overtime, disclosed that her (now ex-) husband was grooming their daughter for a life of prostitution and pornography. With AAFSC's help, the father can never be alone with the daughter and is being deported. S and daughter live in a shelter, S is working again, and both are in counseling. As it does with its other clients, AAFSC continues to follow S's progress and provide support.

Enlace Comunitario **Albuquerque, New Mexico** www.enlacenm.org

Enlace Comunitario was established in 2000 after an immigrant woman in the community was murdered in an act of domestic violence. At the time, there were no resources for Spanish-

speaking domestic violence survivors – but today, some 27 full-time bi-lingual and bi-cultural staff provide a host of direct services, including individual and family counseling; legal representation in child custody and divorce proceedings; safety planning; support groups for children and teens who've witnessed domestic violence; help with transitional housing; literacy and parenting classes; and job training. Other recent accomplishments include creating a language access program at the local hospital; working with local law enforcement to create a mandatory language access curriculum for the police academy; and challenging the exclusion of undocumented immigrant victims from local transitional housing programs.

Enlace has also developed a winning leadership program, based on the idea that those who've been hurt by domestic violence should be at the forefront of the movement to eliminate it. Every year, Enlace trains a cohort of adult female survivors and youth who've witnessed domestic violence as prevention leaders – to educate the community about healthier relationships and about the impact of domestic violence on children. The programs have been chosen by the Mary Byron Project and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as among the most innovative and promising in the country – and Enlace has since created a male “promotores” program that trains Spanish-speaking Latino men to talk to others about rejecting violence in their lives.

Just one story. S, an immigrant from Mexico, first came to Enlace Comunitario 13 years ago. As she remembers, “it wasn't easy to come to Enlace. It was hard to talk about the abuse and I was fearful for the safety of my loved ones.” But with the help and support of her case manager and therapist, S got shelter, transitional housing, a U-Visa, and accessed other services that helped her find safety and build a new life.

Last year, S came back to Enlace – this time, as the mother of three daughters who are excelling in school, with a new respectful partner, and as the owner of a Mexican restaurant in Albuquerque. To say “thank you,” S provides weekly meals for Enlace's parenting group and other clients – some 1,850 meals in all. “Enlace helped me so much,” she says. And “the best way to give back is to help with what one does best. For me that is through giving my time and my food.”

Asian Women's Shelter San Francisco, California

www.sfaws.org

The Asian Women's Shelter was among the first in the country to serve the language and cultural needs of Asian domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and trafficking survivors. The Shelter's “flexible exit” plan is unique – allowing those who aren't ready to leave or eligible for housing to extend their stays on a month-to-month basis. (A typical stay is 4-5 months.) The Shelter also helped immigrant women speak out about how violent U.S. citizen-spouses keep them in abusive relationships (by, for instance, threatening deportation), which contributed to passage of VAWA's historic immigration provisions in 2013.

The Shelter’s “crown jewel” is its multi-lingual access program, which recruits and trains on-call language advocates from within the refugee and immigrant communities they serve. Thanks to the program, over 100 speakers of 40 languages can now translate for non-English speaking survivors, both in and outside the shelter, so they can get services that were once beyond reach. Whenever a client needs language support for a service in the city, a Shelter staff or language advocate goes with her. The Shelter also provides training and technical assistance to language advocates across the country – who are able, in turn, to tailor culturally-specific prevention and other services for their communities. The shelter sometimes receives calls, for example, from Thai-speaking clients well beyond the Bay Area who otherwise aren’t able to access Thai services.

The Shelter is also one of the first to develop a program specifically focused on domestic and sexual violence within the Asian LGBT community. Now called Queer Asian Women and Transgender Support, the program not only works to eliminate homophobia and transphobia within the shelter, it engages in prevention and intervention campaigns throughout the community.

Thanks to VAWA funding of the Shelter’s work, says Executive Director Elizabeth Kirton, “hundreds of women and children get excellent services, retain custody of their children, are legally able to stay in the U.S. and embark on a life without violence.”

Susanna Wesley Family Learning Center **East Prairie, Missouri** www.swflc.com

Susanna Wesley Family Learning Center was founded in 1992 to help troubled families build nurturing homes and gain economic independence, through adult basic education, a youth food initiative, afterschool and recreational programs, and one of the most comprehensive victim services programs in Missouri, including shelter services for domestic violence survivors. The Center serves a rural region of the Mississippi Delta that faces the twin challenges of rural isolation and widespread poverty: when the Center opened, the county ranked 115 of 115 in a statewide assessment of risk factors for families and children.

With VAWA funds, the Center currently operates four programs serving the needs of diverse populations. Its Legal Assistance Program provides free lawyers for over 350 survivors a year, in child custody, divorce, protection order, and housing proceedings. The Safe Havens Supervised Visitation and Exchange Program provides a safe place for children of survivors to have supervised (typically, court-ordered) visits with a non-custodial parent. Children are exchanged from one parent to the other by trained advocates – which takes substantial pressure off the kids, who can kiss one parent good-bye and hug the other down the hall, without feeling they have betrayed either. A survivor can also rest assured that she won’t be intimidated or hurt at an exchange. The Center’s elder abuse program trains law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors, and advocates about the needs of older survivors. And elder advocates also work with state agencies to help provide, among other services, emergency housing and in-home care until longer term safety plans can be put in place.

The Center's Rural Violence Prevention program is also far-reaching. It employs and trains a special investigator who assists local law enforcement officers in domestic and sexual violence investigations. A teen advocate is housed at local high schools to reach out to students who have been victimized by dating violence or sexual assault, and to talk more generally, peer-to-peer, about these issues. A specially trained advocate, whose office is located in a largely African American community, also serves the distinct needs of African American survivors. During the first six months of the rural program, 94 students and 20 African American women got help, and the special investigator assisted 50 domestic violence and sexual assault investigations.

“Because of VAWA funding,” says Center Executive Director, Martha Black, “we have very holistic wraparound services in a very rural part of the state. [We] are in the schools, law enforcement agencies, court, churches, community outreach centers, and nutrition centers.” Black is also proud of the Center's collaborative staff, who are cross-trained to help with all programs, which means a survivor doesn't lose out on a service because an employee is unavailable. “You can have a nice building and lots of funding,” says Black. “But if you don't have a dedicated, trained, compassionate staff you have nothing.”

Just one story. S was for many years married to one of the wealthiest men in the county. She, though, had no resources of her own, and had to ask for money for her most basic needs. He was emotionally abusive, controlling, and intimidating. With the help of the Center's elder abuse advocates, S was finally able to divorce him, received counseling and a life alert pendant, and lived in transitional housing for a year. She is now living on her own, and works part time in schools, leading a youth leadership program and volunteering to help other survivors.

Veterans on Deck **Charleston, South Carolina**

www.veteransondeck.org

Among other veterans, this program serves female survivors of Military Sexual Trauma (MST), who often suffer from social withdrawal and depression – and whose needs have been regularly unmet by predominantly male counselors and male-oriented veterans' services. To address this service gap, a team of sexual trauma therapists and sailors devised this program – which uses sailing as a form of therapy, with on-board exercises in teambuilding, skill mastery, and empowerment training (often under stressful or challenging sailing conditions), and as a way for survivors to talk to each other and understand what happened to them. Sails now launch every day, with many being led by former or current clients. The Veterans Administration named Veterans on Deck a “Promising Project,” and has replicated it elsewhere. One program participant, who went through a divorce and depression after returning from service, said getting back on the water with women who had had similar experiences was therapeutic in more ways than one. “You feel like you're not alone,” she said. “Working together as a team really helps a lot.”

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin: REACH Project Madison, Wisconsin

www.endabusewi.org

The REACH Project (Respectful, Empowering, Accessible, Collaborative, Honoring) recognizes that advocates of color and survivors bring crucial, unique voices to the movement to end domestic and sexual violence. In its VAWA-funded year-long leadership Academy – WE LEAD – REACH provides hands-on leadership training and opportunities for some 12-14 up-and-coming leaders from Wisconsin’s underserved or under-represented communities. REACH also hosts an annual Leadership Institute (in its 18th year) that brings together over 100 advocates of color from a broad spectrum of life experiences, who discuss the impact of domestic violence in their communities and exchange ideas about how to make things better. Participants report that they appreciate the anchor and safe space the Institute provides, free of the strain some feel at other, more mainstream movement gatherings.

Also with VAWA funds, REACH evaluated the impact of domestic violence and access to services within the African American community – and its recently published report will hopefully bring needed changes in Wisconsin’s provision of services for these survivors. A joint effort with the LGBTQ Task Force seeks to ensure, through training and advocacy, that LGBTQ survivors of domestic and sexual violence have access to safe, culturally responsive services. And REACH works closely with American Indians Against Abuse, as well as 13 tribal programs, to support effective, accessible services on and off 11 Wisconsin reservations and tribal lands. REACH reports: “We are very proud that we are able to create safe spaces for underrepresented communities as well as for survivors in everything that we do.”

Rape Response Services Bangor, Maine

www.rrsonline.org

Rape Response Services (RRS) offers a full range of services for sexual assault and stalking survivors, including crisis intervention, personalized advocacy, safety planning, and accompaniment to medical or legal appointments – regardless of whether the abuse occurred the night before or decades earlier. With VAWA money, RRS is also focusing on homeless survivors. An advocate has office hours at the area’s two largest homeless shelters, and in addition to one-on-one support, she runs education groups there. Having someone on-site has prompted a number of survivors, who’d remained silent about their abuse, sometimes for years, to disclose what happened and reach out for help. The advocate’s work has been particularly important to male survivors of sexual violence, who comprise a high percentage of shelter guests. VAWA also funds RRS’s advocate in rural Piscataquis County, which gives the agency a continued, steady presence there. By building trust and comfort in the community, the advocate not only receives community referrals, but regularly welcomes “walk-in” survivors to her office.

Casa de Esperanza
St. Paul, Minnesota
www.casadeesperanza.org

Casa de Esperanza is the largest Latina domestic violence organization in the country, and grounds its array of services for Latina survivors in “where they live.” Advocates go to a woman’s home, job, or other private place to develop a plan for her safety, legal, transportation, housing, immigration, and other needs. The organization runs a 24-hour bi-lingual hotline, as well as an around-the-clock crisis shelter (El Refugio), a model program for children of survivors, and provides “roving advocacy” to other domestic violence organizations.

Casa de Esperanza is currently using VAWA money to connect Latina survivors with culturally-accessible transitional and long-term housing in neighborhoods where they feel at home and comfortable. For immigrant women, finding affordable, quality housing is especially difficult, as many lack a rental history or stable employment – so Casa de Esperanza works with landlords and housing organizations to build a larger pool of housing options. In addition to its standard array of comprehensive services, this program also provides six months of support with rent, utilities, and transportation. An advocate meets weekly with program participants, and also via phone twice a week, to help turn their safety or employment or childcare plans into reality.

“We are very excited,” the group reports, “to see how much a person can do when the support is available.” And its success, according to Casa de Esperanza’s leadership, is due in large measure to the priority it places on listening. “Women have a comfort and trust with us,” says transitional housing advocate Alex Zosel. “[We] let women be experts of their own life,” adds Rosario de la Torre, family advocacy manager, “because they know what’s best for their children and families.”

Center for Survivors
Columbus, Nebraska
www.centerforsurvivors.net

Center for Survivors serves sexual and domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking survivors in six counties in rural northeast Nebraska. In 2013, the Center answered 1,427 calls to its crisis line, provided services to 1,015 clients, and served 5,221 meals. Its adolescent program includes four advocates who provide prevention education to 11 area schools and services to 14-23-year-olds throughout the region.

In response to a 1996 study revealing that over 50% of Nebraska teens had experienced relationship violence, the Center developed “Revolution,” an innovative teen education group. Revolution members are students ages 14-20 who are committed to increasing awareness about dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking among their peers. Members write and perform theater pieces at school assemblies across the state. After the play – which “talked to us like we talk,” according to one who saw it – members answer questions (in character) from the audience, and then provide additional information (including via a slide show) about the dynamics of dating

violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Often after a performance, kids from the audience approach Revolution members to relay personal experiences or ask for help – and members, in turn, are equipped to point them in the direction of available services. Revolution has grown from four members in 1998 to 44 today – and from January through June 2014, took its presentation to 1,485 Nebraska kids.

Some student reactions:

- “Watching made me want to do something. A lot of us guys are good and we need to start speaking up.” – 18-year-old male.
- “This presentation really got to me. ... It was crazy how real it was.” – 16-year-old male.
- “The information on sexual assault really helped me because I was assaulted when I was younger.” – 14-year-old female.
- ”This material is really important because it is like I’m recreated. My perspective changed drastically.” – 17-year-old male.
- “It was good to hear that the way I felt after being sexually assaulted was normal.” – 16-year-old female.

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Services **Androscoggin, Oxford and Franklin Counties, Maine** www.sapars.org

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Services (SAPARS) provides an array of services for sexual assault survivors, including a 24-hour helpline, escorts to the hospital and police interviews, individual and group counseling, and a children’s advocacy center that provides a safe, comfortable place for a child to talk to professionals about sexual or physical abuse. Also as a central member of the counties’ Sexual Assault Response Teams, SAPARS helps ensure that survivors’ interests are taken into account from the initialing filing of a report through the legal process and beyond.

SAPARS’s VAWA-funded “Creating Connections Program,” which aims to connect with traditionally underserved populations, started with a focus on people with disabilities – but has grown to reach people who are older, who identify as LGBTQ, who are homeless, Somali-African refugee/immigrants, and military veterans. In all these efforts, SAPARS tries to proactively find survivors, rather than the other way around. Turning its attention to under-reported sexual assaults among teens, for instance, SAPARS began holding weekly drop-in hours at local high schools, so students could easily find someone to talk to, as opposed to taking the more difficult step of picking up the phone or walking through SAPARS’s doors. By taking this approach, SAPARS has

provided critical services to over 400 individuals each year, be they in rural communities, at a local commuter college, in a homeless shelter, or in local housing units.

Recognized for its work with elder survivors and people with developmental disabilities, SAPARS is a driving force behind two task forces specifically focusing on these populations. Among other accomplishments, one task force created a widely relied-upon brochure outlining the rights of people with disabilities following disclosure of a sexual assault. Protocols for first responders in such cases were also improved, and the elder abuse task force regularly brings together a multidisciplinary group to coordinate on both individual cases and larger policy issues. Through both of these coalitions, SAPARS conducts “Making the Case” trainings (for law enforcement officers, service providers, advocates, attorneys, and other professionals) aimed at recognizing sexual assault in those populations, the unique needs of survivors (specific to their disability or age), and how to most effectively respond, whether in post-assault interviews, in court, or at other stages of a survivor’s journey. SAPARS has also developed training to help home health workers, meals on wheels drivers, and personal care attendants recognize the “red flags” of elder abuse, and how to effectively respond to the warning signs.

Just one story. A woman in her early 70s started coming to talk to a SAPARS advocate during drop-in hours at her elderly housing facility. For a long time, she spoke only of her kids, her current life, and her medical problems. After several months, however, she started talking about her marriage – and about how her ex-husband had raped her repeatedly, and about the three children she treasures but didn’t choose to have. She had never before said any of this to anyone. This survivor, notes Executive Director Marty McIntyre, would not have called a helpline or joined a support group or come to SAPARS’s office. But because an advocate was there, able and available to build trust, she is now working through the pain (again with SAPARS’s help) that she has silently carried for so many years.

Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine Portland, Maine

www.sarsonline.org

Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM) provides comprehensive 24-hour rape crisis services for male, female, and trans* survivors in one-third of Maine’s population. With VAWA money, SARSSM is also addressing sexual assault, exploitation, and trafficking among Maine’s homeless youth, a highly victimized and underserved population. SARSSM’s work has included breakfast drop-in hours at the state’s largest homeless shelter, direct in-person services at all shelters within its jurisdiction, and a youth advocate at the youth shelter, who provides outreach and conducts support groups. These hands-on efforts mean that once unavailable sexual violence services are now within reach for these kids, and that shelter staff and other clinical providers can meet their needs more effectively.

In partnership with law enforcement and other stakeholders, SARSSM also helped create the Greater Portland Coalition Against Sex Trafficking and Exploitation, a multi-disciplinary effort to

combat sex trafficking and exploitation in southern Maine. Sexual assault advocates work in tandem with shelter, mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence providers, as well as local, state and federal law enforcement agencies and prosecutors, a model for how a small community can collaboratively respond to these heart-breaking cases.

Domestic Violence in Later Life Project, Virginia Center on Aging Richmond, Virginia

www.sahp.vcu.edu/vcoa/program/elderabuse.html

This project at the Virginia Center on Aging at Virginia Commonwealth University was launched with VAWA funding in 2003 to address partner violence in later life, and has since expanded to focus on sexual assault as well. The program provides trainings and workshops for professionals and others who work with older adults, like adult protective services staff, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, domestic and sexual violence advocates, health care personnel, caregivers, and magistrates.

“The complexities of domestic violence are often compounded by aging,” explains Project Coordinator Lisa Furr. Leaving an abuser after many decades, for example, can require a dramatic shift in one’s sense of self – and when the abuser is a caregiver, a dependent victim can face the impossible choice between leaving the abusive situation and having basic needs (like health care and transportation) met. For some, it is also hard to recognize that a new relationship with a much-younger partner carries a risk of abuse.

Furr described yet another difficult and unique situation: “When a victim’s child is the perpetrator, it is hard to reconcile the roles of parent and victim. The parent raised the child and thus feels some responsibility to the child and perhaps for the abuse he or she is receiving.” Parents often want to protect their children, which can prevent them from recognizing that they, in fact, need protection from their kids. By working with the criminal justice system and victim and aging service providers, the Project plays an important role in improving their response to these often invisible survivors.

In a recent case, a young woman convinced a confused family friend that they were a couple; she then drained her older “partner’s” bank account and left him at a hotel. Thanks, in part, to the Project’s advocacy, prosecutors brought charges, won a conviction for abandonment, and obtained some restitution for the victim.

Comanche Nation Family Violence Prevention Program Lawton, Oklahoma

www.comanchenation.com

This program operates the oldest tribal shelter in Oklahoma – a 35-bed facility that is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and that also provides culturally sensitive services to survivors of

domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence. Thanks to VAWA funding, the program is able to offer counseling and life skill classes during non-business hours, so clients aren't denied services because of a job, medical appointment, or other daytime commitments. Notably, the program also follows each of its clients for at least six months. Explains Director Betty Simmons: "they need a support system and to be reminded that we're here for them."

The program also strives to provide culturally relevant supports, like sweat lodges and Native American religious services, as survivors often find comfort in those practices, which can also help them overcome cultural barriers to getting help. Simmons credits VAWA with helping the community better recognize and address domestic violence and sexual assault. "We get many more calls today from people asking how to help," and referring victims to the program.

Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence: Youth Initiatives Boise, Idaho

www.engagingvoices.org

The Idaho Coalition works with survivors of all ages, but has recently focused on teens, launching several student-inspired campaigns to prevent dating violence and sexual assault. "Our Revolution," created in collaboration with high school and college activists, is a comprehensive "conversation guide" to engage teens in the movement to end violence and abuse. The detailed curriculum has been requested by 755 schools and communities in all 50 states (plus Canada and England), and has reached over 3000 students in rural communities alone.

Each year, the "Love What's Real" campaign draws over 2700 student submissions in a writing challenge about healthy (and unhealthy) relationships. The top 100 junior and high school pieces are published, along with a "Power of Words" poetry slam, and celebrated by some 500 students and parents. In May, Love What's Real conducted a statewide ChalkHeART, where students illustrated the poems in a statewide contest. The Coalition's Center for Healthy Teen Relationships also recently released a model school policy to help school districts prevent and address teen relationship abuse and sexual assault.

Since the Coalition implemented its statewide primary prevention program in 2006, Idaho has seen a marked decrease in the number of students who say they've been hit, slapped, or hurt by a dating partner: down from 13.6% in 2007 to 9.1% in 2013. And according to Executive Director Kelly Miller, the Coalition now routinely hears from young people – many who weren't even able to identify what happened to them as abuse – who've been empowered to come forward and get help. One young woman, who worked in the program during high school and went on to Georgetown University, stood up to a group of athletes who made offensive remarks about women in the hallway. She then went on to enlist some of them as emissaries in the effort to prevent violence against women on campus. VAWA money has helped create this sort of ripple effect, according to Miller, who works to have youth voices at the center of the Coalition's youth engagement work.

Women’s Resource Center of Northern Michigan Petoskey, Michigan

www.wrcnm.org

This multi-service organization for women, children and families serves an underrepresented rural population of 130,000 spread out across five counties. Its crisis services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault include a 24-hour hotline, shelter, and ongoing assistance, including for stalking victims. Because the Center also provides services beyond those typically offered by domestic violence and sexual assault organizations, it is able to give survivors who come in crisis a broad array of ongoing support – like before and after school care, readiness programs for their kids, help going back to school, and assistance in finding housing, financial aid, and jobs.

The Center also conducts violence prevention programs in middle and high schools; has launched a “100 Men Campaign,” which for three years has enlisted men in the effort to end violence against women; and every year sees clients graduate from the local community college. (One survivor just completed her nursing degree with help from the Center – and became a grandmother a week later.) The Center works closely with the local Native American tribe to provide culturally-specific services, particularly shelter, as the tribe does not have a shelter. Also with VAWA funds, the Center brings in national experts to train local professionals, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors about domestic violence and sexual assault. This, according to Executive Director Jan Mancinelli, has worked a sea change: because urban centers are over 200 miles away, local departments wouldn’t otherwise be able to send their employees to trainings.

One fifth grader who stayed at the shelter was recently asked where she’d give \$50 if she could. Her answer: “the Women’s Resource Center because they come to your rescue when you need help or a safe place to stay. [Once,] I had to call 911 because I was in trouble, and I used the skills they taught me to get help.”

In Our Own Voices: Capital Region LGBT Anti-Violence Project Albany, New York

www.inourownvoices.org

In Our Own Voices provides culturally specific support, resources, and advocacy to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender survivors of violence, with a particular focus on people of color. Recognizing that these survivors face additional barriers in accessing services, the organization employs a diverse staff – reflecting the sexual orientations, gender identities, race, ethnicities, and spiritualities of program participants – to provide counseling, help with filling out a police report or getting a protection order, case management, emergency assistance, and referrals to other services. As its domestic violence support line states: “Call and speak confidentially to LGBT staff or volunteers. ... We are here to listen, not judge.”

Since 2003, In Our Own Voices has trained and provided technical assistance to over 1250 providers so they can better serve the needs of this community. Executive Director Tandra

LaGrone says VAWA funding has helped the organization “shine a light on the specific issues faced by LGBT people of color,” give survivors a safe space to get the services they need, and be an “invaluable resource to service providers and other professionals in the Capital Region and beyond.”

Tahirih Justice Center
Falls Church, Virginia
www.tahirih.org

Tahirih Justice Center serves immigrant women and girls fleeing violence through free legal and social services, community education, and policy advocacy. Since 1997, Tahirih has assisted nearly 15,000 women and children seeking protection from gender-based human rights abuses such as rape, female genital mutilation, domestic violence, human trafficking, “honor” crimes, and forced marriage. In addition to its own staff (which has grown from 6 to 50), Tahirih taps into an extensive network of over 1,200 pro bono attorneys who represent Tahirih clients in immigration and family law proceedings. Despite the complex and time-intensive nature of its cases, Tahirih has a 99% litigation success rate. Its in-house social services staff also helps clients find shelter, mental health services, job opportunities, food pantries, and other services to help them rebuild their lives in safety and with dignity.

Tahirih is also a national public policy advocate on a number of important issues, including forced marriage, international marriage brokers, female genital mutilation, gender-based asylum, and police protection of the immigrant community.

The United Somali Women of Maine
Lewiston, Maine
www.uswofmaine.org

Thanks to VAWA funding, the United Somali Women of Maine (USWM) provides previously non-existent sexual and domestic violence services to immigrant and refugee survivors and their children. (In 2001, many immigrants from Africa were drawn to the small, safe towns of Lewiston-Auburn, and the community continues to grow.) USWM provides culturally and linguistically-specific advocacy (to help survivors, for example, with safety planning and to find housing, employment, and financial services) and also more broadly aims to be “a voice of the voiceless” throughout the community. Sometimes, the culture from which these women come either condones violence against women or expects survivors to keep the abuse to themselves. USWM has helped survivors overcome these attitudes so, for instance, they can stand before a judge and publically explain the details of their abuse.

Among its efforts, USWM invites groups of women for intimate talks about domestic and sexual violence, and multi-lingual advocates go door-to-door in immigrant neighborhoods to spread the word about USWM’s services and to get a sense of whether a woman is in, or has been in, an

abusive relationship. Often, after a 30-45 minute conversation, a survivor is ready to seek help. And in a recent survey, 59% of immigrant and refugee women said they knew where to find sexual violence services.

USWM has also recently focused its outreach efforts on men: it has hired two men who are engaging others, especially youth, in the effort to end violence against women – via focus groups, Friday prayers at local mosques, one-on-one conversations, and home visits. A number of men in the community have opposed USWM’s work, but through this program (as well as the individual work of Executive Director Fatuma Hussein, herself a Somali refugee), many have been made to see that gender-based violence is destroying, rather than protecting, their families.

Ozark Rape Crisis Center **Harrison, Arkansas** www.ozarkrapecrisis.com

This comprehensive rape crisis program serves six rural Arkansas counties, and was the first in the state to address sexual violence against persons with disabilities. The center operates a 24-hour crisis hotline, and trained volunteer advocates accompany survivors to hospitals, emergency rooms, and police stations, including on nights and on weekends, and also provide help and support throughout a criminal case. Center employees are now also working with Hispanic survivors who work in the local community, many of whom have not sought help before. The Center provides counseling for the family and friends of survivors, and also conducts community education programs, including those – like “Safe Dates,” “Expect Respect,” “Dangerous Relationships,” “Aggressors, victims, and bystanders” – especially targeted at youngsters.

The Chickasaw Nation Shelter **Ada, Oklahoma** www.chickasaw.net/Services/Domestic-Violence-Services

For over six years, this shelter has used VAWA funds to provide a tribal-run sanctuary for survivors and their children within a 13-county radius. The program also started a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program in the tribal hospital, opened a SANE room in the local hospital’s emergency department, and arranged for SANE nurses to rotate to the community hospital – which means that many survivors don’t have to travel hours for a rape exam. A full-time sexual assault advocate is also now on call 24 hours a day. Additionally, the shelter runs two outlying outreach offices, provides career and educational development services, a full-time counselor for women and children, and a batterer’s intervention program. Last year, the first three men graduated from the year-long program, which is now holding six classes in two counties. The shelter also provides victims with transportation – it employs a full-time driver – to medical appointments and other community services. “We are in a very rural area,” Director Karen Gaddis explains, and “transportation is a huge problem.”

According to Gaddis, the tribe has made important strides in helping survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking over the last ten years. It now has a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) that meets every month to discuss cases and improve its response to sexual assault, and it recently partnered with other community organizations to hold its sixth annual “Stomp Out Sexual Assault” walk, which over 500 people attended.

Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence Denver, Colorado

www.ccadv.org

The Coalition does not itself provide direct services, but works to combat domestic violence in Colorado on a number of fronts: it trains professionals in the field (including judges) who work with survivors; it advocates for changes in domestic violence laws, policies, and practices; it serves as a clearinghouse for innovative and best practices, research, emerging trends, resources, and training; and it works with domestic violence programs in the trenches, to help build their capacity to best serve survivors and their children. Recently, the Coalition worked to pass a significant law in the state, providing that courts issuing domestic-violence protection orders must also order a defendant to relinquish any firearms – and making it a crime if he refuses to do so.

VAWA money has also helped the Coalition recently establish Coordinated Community Response Teams in four rural areas: each team evaluates how its community is responding to domestic violence (for example, whether the 911-dispatch system is working quickly enough) and brings together all key stakeholders to forge better solutions and responses. These four sites have agreed to mentor other communities, so the model can be adopted across the state.

The Coalition is also using VAWA funds to establish “promotora” programs in four other rural areas to better reach and serve Latina survivors. The idea is to enlist and train trusted Spanish-speaking members of the community to become domestic violence advocates and educators – and to act as a bridge to local advocacy organizations and its services. Promotoras work to establish trust with survivors – to let them know, among other things, that it’s not ok to be abused – so they’ll come forward, report their abuse, and get the help they need.

YWCA Knoxville: Engaging Men and Boys Against Domestic Violence Project

Knoxville, Tennessee

www.ywcaknox.com

Developed and implemented through the Knoxville YWCA, this project directly involves men and boys – particularly, middle school boys who are at-risk of witnessing or perpetrating domestic or sexual violence – in the effort to end the abuse of women. Via group mentoring sessions and afterschool programs, the bystander intervention curriculum teaches young men how to safely and

creatively intervene if they see someone in trouble, or when their peers make derogatory, sexist comments. The Project also plans to launch a multimedia campaign to raise awareness about domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking – and the University of Tennessee College of Social Work will help evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

As it has picked up steam, the need for this VAWA-funded project has become readily apparent. Just recently: one middle school participant told of how he witnessed a sexual assault in the school bathroom; two young brothers are living with a father who just the week before a focus group strangled and beat their mother; and a professional contributor told of how her sister was murdered by an abusive husband seven years ago. The Project, according to the YWCA’s Hannah Brinson, aims to bring an end to “these heartbreaking and traumatic experiences” – or, at least, to make them much less likely.

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life Madison, Wisconsin

www.ncall.us

This VAWA-supported project of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin focuses on the abuse of individuals 50 years and older, and through advocacy and education, aims to make them safer, increase abuser accountability, and expand the community’s awareness and response to the problem. Seventy-seven million baby boomers are aging, and people over 85 (the fastest growing segment of the population) are disproportionately women. These trends have significant implications for this demographic – and the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) works to ensure that service providers of all types better account for the needs of older survivors and understand the nexus between domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

In 2013, NCALL trained over 1300 professionals (including domestic and sexual violence programs, aging bureaus, health care and legal service providers, and protective services) and provided over 340 hours of technical assistance to organizations in need. It has authored numerous journal articles, developed a variety of training guides, and helped create eight national model curricula. In collaboration with other stakeholders, NCALL created a national curriculum for prosecutors on how to effectively try cases of elder abuse – and a team of experienced prosecutors, social service workers, and advocates presented a week-long training institute for 52 prosecutors from 22 states.

Planet Kids Missoula, Montana

www.ywcaofmissoula.org

A project of the YWCA of Missoula, Planet Kids provides safe, monitored exchanges and visits for families affected by domestic violence. Its secure, child-friendly facility (with two separate

entrances and parking spaces, and a one-way glass window inside) is the only such center in the state – and last year, it served 140 families and 207 children with some 3,200 supervised visits. Most families are referred to Planet Kids by family court judges, but referrals also come from law enforcement, mental health organizations, and child protective services. The staff is trained in the dynamics of domestic violence and follows strict safety protocols – all while helping put kids at ease with games, activities, or a ready lap to sit on. Judges report that they “don’t know what they would do without Planet Kids,” and law enforcement officers refer to the time “before and after Planet Kids” in describing the safety of children in the community. Typically, there’s a 15-minute buffer between the time a parent drops off a child and the other parent shows up; one grateful client said she would otherwise “die of anxiety if she had to exchange face-to-face with her ex.”

Riverview Center: Carroll County Satellite Office Galena, Illinois

www.riverviewcenter.org

The Riverview Center is a dual service sexual assault and domestic violence agency. Last year, it provided 782 survivors with some 7,500 hours of trauma-informed therapy/counseling and other wraparound care (legal, medical, social service advocacy) at all stages of recovery. It also provides crisis support and referrals through its hotlines – last year, there were over 1,000 calls – and reaches thousands of children and adults with its prevention presentations.

Also thanks to VAWA funds, the Center is able to bring its services to a very rural, underserved community in Carroll County, Illinois. Being in a rural area compounds the challenge of addressing crimes against women, says Center Legal Advocate Diane Heath. “We’re ten to twenty years behind the general public in our attitudes and cultural approach to domestic violence and sexual abuse.” Among its other work, the Carroll County Office is working with police and area service providers to better identify and respond to sexual abuse, including revising police protocols. The Office also convened a task force of area stakeholders – prosecutors and probation officers, judges and court clerks, victim-witness coordinators, 911 operators – whose regular meetings, all agree, have markedly improved the lives of survivors.

Through its local “Illinois Imagines” coalition, the Center is also working to better support survivors with disabilities in the county. This population is not only at higher risk of being assaulted, survivors also have a much harder time getting the services they need and participating in a legal case, be it criminal or civil. The Center trains and mentors survivors to become self-advocates for their own rights and needs, and also works with family members and caregivers. In a recent case, the Center helped secure legal representation for a 16-year-old girl who had been sexually abused by a family member; counseled her mother, who also has a cognitive disability; helped her get a no-contact order; and worked one-on-one with the survivor’s siblings, who were also traumatized by the assault. Both the survivor and her mother received the Center’s services for eight months. The abuser, for his part, was criminally charged and convicted.

Women of Color Network
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
www.womenofcolornetwork.org

Founded in 1997 as a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, the Women of Color Network provides trainings, technical assistance, and advocacy to cultivate women-of-color leaders in the movement to end violence against women in communities of color. Last year, some 40 underrepresented Leadership Fellows and 10 Aspiring Allies graduated from an intensive 18-month bi-weekly training (covering topics like fundraising, program development, and public policy) provided by 36 national experts and partner organizations – and an additional 28 Fellows and 18 Allies are currently in training. The Network’s mentoring project also links approximately 100 mentors with nearly 300 mentees from across the United States and territories.

In addition to its leadership training programs, VAWA money supports other of the Network’s initiatives: the Network provides state-level VAWA grant administrators with curricula and toolkits so the needs of underserved communities are better met by funded-programs, and so Network-inspired leaders can have a voice at the table for state anti-violence planning. That African-American women are dying at rates two-to-three times that of white women from domestic violence, and Native women are sexually assaulted at a greater rate than all others, makes the Network’s input particularly vital. VAWA money also funds the National Call to Action Training and Technical Assistance Project, whereby the Network works with state coalitions to include anti-oppression programming within their overall work. In the past 36 months, the Network has worked with eight coalitions, with the hope that they will serve as models for their local member organizations.

Victim Resource Center of the Finger Lakes
Wayne County, New York
www.vrcfl.org

The Victim Resource Center serves immigrant survivors in four highly rural counties, providing shelter, a 24/7 bi-lingual crisis hotline, outreach to the migrant farmworker community, and translation and other direct services to survivors who don’t primarily speak English. The Center also pays special attention to the needs of children: last year, in addition to the over 150 protection orders and temporary custody petitions it secured on behalf of survivors and their kids, it directly served 106 child victims of sexual assault and 149 child victims of domestic violence.

The Center educates an array of first responders – including police, 911 operators, and other professionals – on the unique cultural and linguistic challenges faced by immigrant survivors, and the special standards of care needed to meet their needs. It provides this same training to schools, churches, local magistrates, and other law enforcement personnel – and also offers in-home education on domestic violence and support groups in area schools. With partners in the area, the Center is exploring the possibility of creating a “Language Bank” of domestic and sexual violence-trained volunteers who speak multiple languages and who can better get services to survivors in

the area. The Center’s four employees are aided by an untold number of volunteers, and according to Executive Director Ramona Palmers, VAWA funds are “life-saving” for the survivors and children the Center serves.

Virginia Anti-Violence Project Richmond, Virginia

www.virginiaavp.org

The Virginia Anti-Violence Project provides help and resources to LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence, a group whose unique needs were not being met by more traditional organizations in the area. Among other forms of abuse, survivors who identify as LGBTQ may face threats of being “outed” or having their HIV status disclosed; refusals to practice safe sex; threats to have children taken away; isolation from family and friends; and use of societal prejudice to reinforce the “danger” of reaching out for help.

In its Survivor Handbook, the Project provides LGBTQ-specific information about where survivors, as well as those victimized by hate-motivated violence and harassment, can turn. These latter victims, the Handbook notes, often blame themselves – believing they are “too gay looking” or “shouldn’t have worn those clothes” – but as it also says: “being targeted for who we are is never our fault.” The Project also launched a statewide LGBTQ Helpline this year, conducts healthy relationship skills classes, and provides training for service providers about issues unique to this community. The Project is also working to expand its services, community education, and prevention programming to the LGBTQ community in the Richmond area – and Project Manager Maria Altonen says that none of these services were available before, nor could they be expanded without, VAWA funding.

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine Brunswick, Maine

www.sassmm.org

The professionals and trained volunteers of Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM) provide advocacy and support to survivors, families and others affected by sexual assault, abuse, and harassment, and they also conduct prevention, education and risk reduction programs throughout five Maine counties.

Through its VAWA-funded Abuse In Later Life Sexual Assault Program, SASSMM has reached hundreds of individuals 50 and older at congregate or assisted living facilities, where advocates provide one-on-one services and group sessions. In the “Life’s Journey” component, groups of older adults who have been sexually assaulted gather to discuss their often painful pasts and, through trained facilitators, focus on their strength and resiliency in the face of the trauma. Some 92.7% of group participants (whose average age is in the mid-70s) have disclosed current or past sexual assault, with 50% having been abused as children. SASSMM’s “Tea and Tips” brings

together community partners to educate older adults on a variety of issues, from safety awareness in caregiving situations, fire safety, and nutrition. Some 28% of those who have participated in the Tea and Tips series have disclosed that they are, or have been, victims of sexual abuse.

SASSMM has also used VAWA funding to provide dedicated services for survivors with disabilities. It created a professional development curriculum for law enforcement, and helped develop the “If I Tell” video series that provides interactive programming for people with intellectual disabilities, so sexual violence against them can be identified and responded to. It is available in quality audio, American Sign Language, and closed captioning.

Given its work on behalf of elder survivors and those with disabilities, SASSMM also provides training to other professionals and service providers about the unique needs of these groups, and brings their voices to the table in statewide discussions about sexual violence. SASSMM also helped write Maine’s Guidelines for screening in-home personal caregivers – which gives those looking to hire private caregivers the questions they should ask applicants, and directs them to available screening resources.

YWCA of Sauk Valley: Lee County Office Sterling, Illinois

www.ywca.org

YWCA of the Sauk Valley is located in an extremely isolated and rural area: there is no public transportation, violent crime and unemployment have jumped, and the majority of citizens work in the local prison or in the farming industry. The YWCA serves sexual assault survivors of all ages with counseling, education, court advocacy, referrals for health services and forensic exams, and in getting protection orders. It employs bi-lingual and bi-cultural staff to reach the county’s underserved Latino population, and works with local schools, law enforcement and social services agencies to identify survivors and offer assistance.

Just one story. S, a high school participant in the YWCA’s “Healthy Relationship” school program, told the program leader that she’d been sexually assaulted while sleeping over at a friend’s house. During the course of counseling, she revealed that her parents were also abusing her – withholding food and medical care, and locking her in her room. With the YWCA’s intervention and continued counseling, S successfully transitioned into a foster home. Impressed with the organization’s work, the state home at which S temporarily stayed asked the YWCA to hold weekly group sessions for the other kids there, most of whom are survivors of family violence. Without VAWA, the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault says, S might still be in an abusive home, and the other children in the group home would not be learning valuable skills to help rebuild their lives.

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