The Impact of Funding Delays on Programs and Survivors

Outreach and Advocacy Toolkit

Federal funding is critical to ensuring survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault can access lifesaving services and support. When funding is delayed, programs are left without the resources needed to operate, leading to reduced services, staff shortages, or even program closures - putting survivors' safety and stability at risk.

Funding delays have real and immediate consequences, and lawmakers need to hear from you! Use this toolkit to help guide your outreach and advocacy efforts.

Your advocacy is working - we have already seen success with the release of some delayed Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) and grants. **But the work is not done.** Questions remain about the release of the remaining NOFOs, when these funds will reach domestic violence and sexual assault organizations, and when critical funding that has yet to be distributed will be released. We encourage you to **continue contacting lawmakers to maintain momentum** and ensure your voices are heard!

Contact Your State/Territory Lawmakers

These funding delays also have significant impacts on state, territory, and local systems. Because many states/territories cannot absorb or backfill delays in federal victim services funding, disruptions at the federal level can create serious budget challenges for states/territories.

In addition to contacting Members of Congress, advocates should also share these concerns with state/territory lawmakers, attorneys general, governors, and other state/territory leaders who can help elevate the urgency of these delays.

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Talking Points

Critical Funding Delays Impacting Survivors:

- Domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and other programs serving survivors have been experiencing delays in federal funding across core funding for the field, including FVPSA and VAWA funding. This instability is forcing programs to consider staffing reductions, reduced services for survivors, and, in some cases, program closures.

- The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) must **immediately release all remaining FY25 funding and publish the remaining FY26 Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs).** Congress must also work together to hold DOJ and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) accountable for **timely distribution of congressionally appropriated funds and ensure these delays do not continue moving forward.** Survivors and programs cannot wait - this action is needed today!

- **Additionally, FY26 Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) funding was significantly delayed, and domestic violence programs are still experiencing the downstream impacts of those delays.** Although the federal government has now released the Notices of Award (NOAs) for state and territory FVPSA grants, the funding must still be processed and subawarded by states and territories to local domestic violence shelters and programs - a process that can take several months. Because the federal funding timeline was significantly delayed, many programs have already gone months without FVPSA funding and will face additional delays before these critical resources reach them. For programs with limited cash reserves, these gaps can create significant challenges in maintaining core operations and lifesaving services.

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Funding Delays:

- VAWA grants support more than two million services every year for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. This includes emergency shelter, legal services, mental health services, housing assistance, economic support, and specialized services through law enforcement and the courts.

- **Some FY25 Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) grant funds have not been released.** These grants, intended to begin on October 1, 2025, are more than 1 year delayed, leaving programs in limbo, with many having to lay off staff and reduce or eliminate grant services.

- Some **FY26 Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) NOFOs have also not been released. The delays in applications will inevitably delay grant awards and the release of funds nationwide.**

What These Delays Mean For Programs & Survivors:

- Most victim service providers operate with limited reserves and cash on hand, meaning **funding delays are effectively funding cuts**.

- As a result, programs - and the organizations that support them - are being forced to consider reducing services, reducing staff, or, in some cases, closing their doors. *[Insert state/territory/program-specific examples here.]*

- This instability is straining already overextended programs, increasing staff burnout, and reducing overall capacity to serve survivors.

- Victim advocates provide critical services including crisis response, emergency shelter, legal advocacy, and support for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. State and territorial coalitions against domestic violence and sexual assault, and training and technical assistance providers, give critical support to advocates and programs serving the complex needs of survivors. Continued funding delays are contributing to staffing losses and limiting access to these essential services.

- Our communities depend on these grants to strengthen responses to domestic violence and sexual assault. In my [program/community], delays are or will result in: *[Insert specific impacts such as staffing shortages, waitlists, reduced services, or coverage gaps.]*

- This ongoing instability is creating unnecessary chaos, frustration, and fear in a field already operating under high demand and limited resources. Advocates deserve a stable environment that allows them to focus fully on supporting survivors and their children.

How To Contact Your Members of Congress

Who is your Member of Congress?
You can find your Senator at https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact and your Representative at https://ziplook.house.gov/htbin/findrep_house?ZIP=.

Call their office
To contact your Senators and Representative by phone, call the US Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 or find their phone numbers on their websites.

Email them
To contact your Senators and Representatives by email, go to their website and click on the 'contact us' link. If you know someone in their office, contact them directly. See here for a staff contact list.

Contact State/Territory lawmakers
It is also important to share these concerns and messaging with state/territory-level leaders, including state legislators, attorneys general, governors, and other state/territory leaders - particularly where funding delays are creating challenges for state and local budgets.

Call and Email Script

House and Senate Call Script:

Hello, my name is [your name], and I'm a constituent from [your city and state/territory and, if applicable, your organization].

I'm calling with urgent concern about ongoing delays in federal funding for domestic violence and sexual assault services programs and the providers that support them.

I urge [Representative or Senator's name] to press the Department of Justice to immediately expedite the release of all congressionally appropriated funds for the Office on Violence Against Women, and publish all delayed FY26 OVW Notices of Funding Opportunities.

VAWA grants support more than two million services every year for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. This includes emergency shelter, legal services, mental health services, housing assistance, economic support, and specialized services through law enforcement and the courts.

Some FY25 OVW grant funds have still not been released, even though these grants were intended to begin on October 1, 2025. Programs are now twelve months into the grant year and are still waiting for this funding, leaving many in limbo and forcing programs to make difficult decisions such as laying off staff and reducing or eliminating grant services. Additionally, some **FY26 OVW NOFOs have also not been released, which will further delay the award and distribution of funding to programs nationwide.**

These delays will force programs to consider staffing cuts, reduced services, and, in some cases, complete closures.

[*Explain the importance of funding and the impact delays are having or will have on your programs and community*.]

Survivors and programs cannot wait any longer. We need [Representative or Senator's name] to act now to help ensure these funds are released immediately and to hold federal agencies accountable for preventing these delays in the future.

***House and Senate Email Script**:*

Subject: Urgent: Funding Delays are Harming Programs and Survivors!

Dear [Representative or Senator's name],

My name is [Your Name], and I'm a constituent from [your city and state/territory and, if applicable, your organization]. I am writing to express urgent concern about ongoing delays in federal funding for domestic violence and sexual assault services programs and the providers that support them.

Across the country, these delays are creating significant instability for programs that survivors rely on every day. Many providers are already being forced to consider staffing cuts, reduced services, and even possible closures.

It is critical that [Representative/Senator Name] do everything in their congressional power to urge the Department of Justice (DOJ) to expedite the release of all congressionally appropriated funds for the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), and to immediately publish all delayed FY26 OVW Notices of Funding Opportunities.

VAWA grants support more than two million services every year for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. This includes emergency shelter, legal services, mental health services, housing assistance, economic support, and specialized services through law enforcement and the courts.

Some FY25 OVW grant funds have still not been released, even though those grants were intended to begin on October 1, 2025. Programs are now twelve months into the grant year and are still waiting for funding, leaving many in limbo and forcing difficult decisions about staffing and services. Additionally, some FY26 OVW NOFOs have not yet been released, which will further delay the award and distribution of funding to programs nationwide.

[*Explain the importance of funding and the impact delays are having or will have on your programs and community*.]

It is imperative that [Representative/Senator Name] understands the urgent impact these funding delays are having on programs and survivors in [your city and state/territory]. Programs need these funds to keep their doors open and ensure survivors can continue accessing lifesaving services.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue. I look forward to your continued support.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Click-To-Email: Quorum Action Alert

Use this link to quickly send a pre-drafted email to your Senators and Representative urging action on funding delays. This is an easy way to take action, and we also encourage you to reach out directly to offices or staff you have relationships with. Use the email template provided to include local examples and context on the impact.

Social Media

Social media handles: Find the X (Twitter) handles of your Senators here and your Representatives here. You can also likely find Instagram and Facebook handles for your members on their websites; you can find for your Senators here and Representatives here.

Hashtags: #FundSafetyNow #SupportSurvivors #SurvivorsDeserveBetter

Sample Posts:

- Federal funding is critical to ensuring survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault can access lifesaving services and support. The OVW funding delays have real and immediate consequences for survivors and the programs they depend on. [@Representative or Senator]: Tell DOJ to immediately publish all delayed OVW NOFOs and to expedite the release of congressionally appropriated OVW funds. Survivors can't wait. #FundSafetyNow #SupportSurvivors #SurvivorsDeserveBetter

- Domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and programs that support survivors are experiencing federal funding delays. Continued delays inOVW funding will force programs to lay off staff, reduce services, and close their doors,

leaving survivors with nowhere to go. [@Representative or Senator]: Tell DOJ to immediately publish all delayed OVW NOFOs and urge them to expedite the release of congressionally appropriated OVW funds. Survivors can't wait. #FundSafetyNow #SupportSurvivors #SurvivorsDeserveBetter

- Some Office on Violence Against Women (#OVW) grants were supposed to begin on October 1, 2025. Twelve months into the grant year, some grant funds haven't been released, leaving programs in limbo and forced to lay off staff and reduce or eliminate grant-funded services for survivors. [@Representative or Senator]: Tell the DOJ to expedite the release of congressionally appropriated OVW funds. Survivors can't wait. #FundSafetyNow #SupportSurvivors #SurvivorsDeserveBetter

- Our communities depend on federal grants to support survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. [Insert specific impacts for your program, community, state, territory… such as staffing shortages, waitlists, reduced services, or coverage gaps.] [@Representative or Senator]: Tell DOJ to immediately publish all the delayed OVW NOFOs and urge them to expedite the release of congressionally appropriated OVW funds. Survivors can't wait. #FundSafetyNow #SupportSurvivors #SurvivorsDeserveBetter

- [@Representative or Senator]: You must press the Department of Justice to immediately publish the delayed FY26 Notices of Funding Opportunities and urge them to expedite the release of all congressionally appropriated funds for the the Office on Violence Against Women (#OVW). Survivors are counting on you to act now. #FundSafetyNow #SupportSurvivors #SurvivorsDeserveBetter

- Survivors and programs cannot wait any longer for federal funding. We need [@Representative or Senator] to act now to help ensure these funds are released immediately. Tell DOJ to immediately publish all the delayed OVW NOFOs and urge them to expedite the release of congressionally appropriated OVW funds. Survivors can't wait. #FundSafetyNow #SupportSurvivors #SurvivorsDeserveBetter

- [@Representative or Senator], it's imperative that you understand the urgent impact that federal funding delays are having on programs and survivors in [community/city/state/territory]. Programs need these funds now to keep their doors open and ensure survivors can continue accessing lifesaving services. You can make a difference. Tell DOJ to immediately publish all the delayed OVW NOFOs and urge them to expedite the release of congressionally appropriated

OVW funds. Survivors can't wait. #FundSafetyNow #SupportSurvivors #SurvivorsDeserveBetter

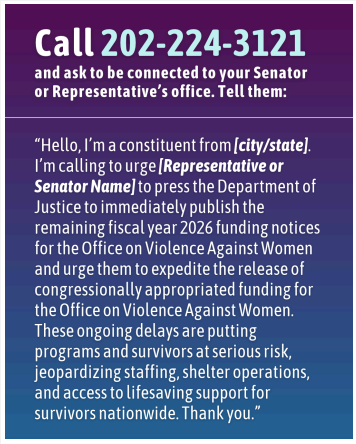
Sample Graphics:

***** DOWNLOAD GRAPHICS HERE *****

See graphics on next pages!

	**Image Description:** Against a purple and teal background is a graphic of the U.S. Capitol and text reading: "Over the past year, domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and other programs serving survivors have experienced federal funding delays. Further delays will force programs to lay off staff, reduce services for survivors, and close their doors, leaving survivors with nowhere to go. Survivors deserve better. Congress must act NOW." **Alt Text:** Over the past year, domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and other programs serving survivors have experienced federal funding delays. Further delays will force programs to lay off staff, reduce services for survivors, and close their doors, leaving survivors with nowhere to go. Survivors deserve better. Congress must act NOW.

Additional graphic on next page!

	**Image Description:** Against a purple and teal background is a graphic of the U.S. Capitol and text reading: "Call 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to your Senator or Representative's office. Tell them: Hello, I'm a constituent from [city/state]. I'm calling to urge [Representative or Senator Name] to press the Department of Justice to immediately publish the remaining fiscal year 2026 funding notices for the Office on Violence Against Women and urge them to expedite the release of congressionally appropriated funding for the Office on Violence Against Women. These ongoing delays are putting programs and survivors at serious risk, jeopardizing staffing, shelter operations, and access to lifesaving support for survivors nationwide. Thank you." **Alt Text:** Call 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to your Senator or Representative's office. Tell them: Hello, I'm a constituent from [city/state]. I'm calling to urge [Representative or Senator Name] to press the Department of Justice to immediately publish the remaining fiscal year 2026 funding notices for the Office on Violence Against Women and urge them to expedite the release of congressionally appropriated funding for the Office on Violence Against Women. These ongoing delays are putting programs and survivors at serious risk, jeopardizing staffing, shelter operations, and access to lifesaving support for survivors nationwide. Thank you.

***** DOWNLOAD GRAPHICS HERE *****

Media Outreach

Media coverage can be an effective way to increase public awareness and add pressure on the Administration by highlighting the real impacts funding delays are having on survivors, programs, and communities.

Sharing these stories publicly can help elevate the urgency of releasing federal funds. Use the talking points above, along with local examples, to help develop your messaging and illustrate the impact of these delays.

Contact journalists you have worked with previously or reporters who have covered issues related to domestic violence, sexual assault, federal funding, or related policy issues. Thank them for covering these important issues and explain why these new developments are urgent and need coverage.

If you are unfamiliar with reporters covering these topics in your local paper or media outlets, search the outlet's website using key terms such as "domestic violence," "sexual assault," or "federal funding" and look for coverage beyond crime reporting.

You can also reach out to reporters in your city or county who may be interested in these issues. Contact information is often available in the outlet's "Contact Us" section or on reporter profile pages.

Sample reporting on the delays:

- The Nation - The Trump Administration Is Refusing to Follow the Laws Protecting Domestic Violence Survivors
- Jasmine Mithani (The 19th):
    - How a missing $150 million is impacting domestic violence services.
    - Federal funds for domestic violence services are falling short. California survivors are pushing for a fix.
    - Domestic violence organizations turn away thousands each day. Julia was one of them.
    - Federal grants can save the lives of abuse victims. $200 million is sitting unspent.
    - Without the federal government, almost no money exists to fight domestic violence
    - This domestic violence shelter was told it no longer aligns with the Trump administration's priorities
    - Domestic violence groups fear survivor services could disappear without warning
- The Skimm - The Federal Funds That Never Arrived
- Paywall: The Virginian-Pilot - Hampton Roads women's shelter operations in jeopardy amid unexpected grant pause
    - No paywall: Yahoo! News - Hampton Roads women's shelter operations in jeopardy amid unexpected grant pause