

Updated January 12, 2021

# Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)

## History of FVPSA

Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, domestic violence remained a hidden problem. Survivors (or victims) were hesitant to seek help, primarily because of fear of retaliation by their partners and concerns about leaving their communities. In the 1960s and 1970s, shelters and services for survivors became more widely available. In 1984, the Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a report that examined the scope and impact of domestic violence in the United States, and recommended improvements in law enforcement and community responses to offenses that were previously considered “family matters.” As a result of efforts by advocates and DOJ, Congress held a series of hearings on domestic violence. In response, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act was enacted as Title III of the Child Abuse Amendments of 1984 (P.L. 98-457).

FVPSA has twice been amended by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), first enacted in 1994. FVPSA and VAWA are the primary vehicles for federal support to prevent and respond to domestic violence. FVPSA is focused on prevention and services for survivors, while VAWA’s focus is on both services for victims and the criminal justice response to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence.

## Scope of the Issue

FVPSA primarily addresses *domestic violence* and *dating violence*. Both can include acts of physical, psychological, and sexual violence as well as stalking. Domestic violence, sometimes referred to as *family violence*, involves current or former spouses, individuals who share children in common, cohabiting partners, and other intimate partners. Dating violence occurs between individuals who have a romantic relationship, including teenagers. Studies do not indicate a primary reason why domestic and dating violence are perpetrated, in part because of the difficulty measuring social conditions that can influence such violence. They do, however, identify two underlying factors: the unequal position of women and the normalization of violence, both in society and in some relationships.

Estimating the number of individuals involved in intimate partner violence is complicated by varying definitions of the term and methodologies for collecting data. A study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) examined the prevalence of intimate partner (domestic and dating) violence in 2015. Over one-third of women and men in America reported that they experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. However, women were more likely to experience related impacts, such as having injuries and a need for victim services.

## Overview of FVPSA

FVPSA supports temporary shelter and services for survivors, as well as children exposed to domestic and teen dating violence. The law currently authorizes three major activities: the National Domestic Violence Hotline; domestic violence shelters, victim services, and program support; and the Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances (DELTA) program. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS’) Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) administers funding for the hotline and domestic violence shelters and services. The CDC, also within HHS, administers DELTA. The statute authorized funding for these activities through FY2015. **Table 1** shows final funding amounts for FY2017 through FY2020 (and enacted funding for FY2021). Funding generally increased over the period.

**Table 1. FVPSA Final Funding, FY2017-FY2020 and Enacted Funding, FY2021 (Dollars in millions)**

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Hotline	\$8.2	\$9.3	\$10.3	\$14.0	\$13.0
Shelter & Services	\$150.5	\$158.4	\$163.9	\$220.0	\$185.5
DELTA	\$5.5	\$5.5	\$5.5	\$7.1	\$5.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$164.2</i>	<i>\$173.2</i>	<i>\$180.0</i>	<i>\$241.1</i>	<i>\$204.0</i>

**Source:** CRS, based on correspondence with HHS, October 2020 and review of appropriation laws.

**Note:** FY2020 data include supplemental appropriations (P.L. 116-136). Due to rounding, some numbers do not add to the total.

## National Domestic Violence Hotline

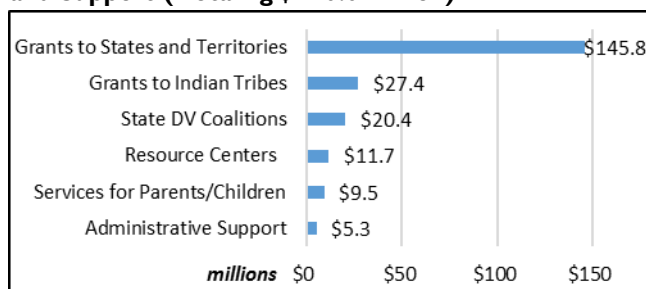
Since 1996, HHS has competitively awarded a cooperative agreement to one organization to operate the National Domestic Violence Hotline. The agreement was most recently awarded for a five-year period that extends through the end of FY2020. FVPSA specifies that the hotline provide information and assistance to adult and youth victims of domestic violence, family and household members of victims, and others affected by victimization. This includes support concerning domestic violence, dating violence, children exposed to domestic violence, intervention programs for abusive partners, and related topics. As required under FVPSA, the national hotline carries out multiple activities. It employs, trains, and supervises personnel to answer incoming calls; provides counseling and referral services to victims and others; and directly connects callers to service providers in local communities. In FY2018, the hotline received more than 23,000 calls each month and responded to 74% of all calls. It also had an average of nearly 13,000 online chats on a monthly basis.

The hotline maintains a database of domestic violence service providers throughout the United States, including information on the availability of shelter and services. Further, it provides assistance to meet the needs of certain populations, including individuals with disabilities and underserved groups. Since 2007, the hotline has operated loveisrespect, the National Dating Abuse Hotline for youth victims of dating violence. In FY2018, the loveisrespect hotline responded to nearly 2,400 calls and nearly 4,000 chats per month. The National Hotline has also collaborated with the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, a nonprofit organization, to develop and operate the StrongHearts Native Helpline for Native American survivors of domestic abuse.

## Shelters, Services, and Program Support

Appropriations for shelters, victim services, and program support provide funding for multiple activities: grants for states and territories, grants to Indian tribes, state domestic violence coalitions (SDVCs), training and technical assistance centers, specialized services for abused parents and their children, and administrative support provided by HHS. **Figure 1** shows allocations for FY2020.

**Figure 1. FY2020 Allocations for Shelter, Services, and Support (Totaling \$220.0 million)**



**Source:** CRS, based on correspondence with HHS, September 2020. FY2020 data include supplemental CARES Act (P.L. 116-136) appropriations.

### Grants to States, Territories, and Tribes

Of the appropriations for shelter and services, no less than 70% must be awarded to states and territories and no less than 10% must be awarded to Indian tribes. These funds are to be used to establish, maintain, and expand programs to prevent and respond to domestic violence. Of the funding for states and territories, each territory (GU, AS, USVI, CNMI) receives no less than one-eighth of 1% of the appropriation, or, in combination, about one-half of 1% of the total amount appropriated. Of the remaining funds, states (including DC and PR) receive an allotment of \$600,000 and additional funding based on their relative share of the U.S. population.

States and territories (states) may use up to 5% of funding for administrative costs. Remaining funds are dedicated to subgrants to eligible entities—local public agencies or nonprofit private organizations—for community-based programs that meet the goals of the grant. No less than 70% of subgrant funding is to be used to provide shelter and related expenses, including the physical space in which survivors reside and the expenses of running shelter facilities. No less than 25% of subgrant funding is to be used for supportive services and prevention services (e.g., assisting in the development of safety plans, providing

counseling and support groups, and services for children). Subgrantees that receive funding must provide a nonfederal match—of not less than \$1 for every \$5 of federal funding—directly from the state or through donations from public or private entities. States have two years to spend funds. States and subgrantees may not deny individuals from participating in FVPSA-funded services on the basis of disability, sex, race, color, national origin, or religion (this applies generally to FVPSA). States and subgrantees may not impose income eligibility requirements on individuals participating in these programs. Generally, the requirements that apply to states also apply to tribes.

### State Domestic Violence Coalitions (SDVCs)

SDVCs are statewide nongovernmental, nonprofit domestic violence organizations whose memberships are made up of domestic violence service providers in the state. Each state has one SDVC, which is designated by HHS. Funding is divided evenly between the 56 of them. SDVCs must use FVPSA funding for specific activities, such as working with local programs to respond to domestic violence, providing training and technical assistance, and planning and monitoring the distribution of subgrants within states.

### Training and Technical Assistance Centers

HHS administers grants for 14 training and technical assistance centers. The purpose of these centers is to provide information, training, and technical assistance on domestic violence topics. This support is provided by nonprofit organizations and other entities to survivors and other stakeholders. The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and the National Indian Resource Center Addressing Domestic Violence and Safety for Indian Women are designated as national resource centers, meaning they have a broader scope and more funding. Other centers focus on selected populations (e.g., Latino communities, Alaska Native communities), specialized issues (e.g., mental health and trauma), and other topics.

### Services for Children

If annual appropriations for shelter and services exceed \$130 million, HHS must reserve a quarter of the funds that exceed this amount for services to children exposed to domestic violence. This requirement was triggered in FY2010 and each of FY2014-FY2020. In recent years, HHS has directed the reserved funds to SDVCs and other entities to address trauma experienced by children exposed to domestic violence, support enhanced relationships among children and their parents, and improve community responses to affected families.

### Domestic Violence Prevention (DELTA)

Since 1996, CDC has awarded DELTA funding to SDVCs to coordinate local community projects to prevent domestic violence. In total, 34 states have received funding under various iterations of the program. Currently, 10 SDVCs receive DELTA funds, and are implementing and evaluating programs or policy efforts under three strategies to address domestic violence prevention: (1) engaging influential adults and peers, including men and boys, as allies in prevention; (2) creating protective environments, including in schools and workplaces; and (3) strengthening economic supports for families.

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