



SUPPORT PROTECTION OF MONIES TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

PROBLEM: The Governor's supplemental budget proposes a 20% reduction to sexual assault services funding, equating to 3 million dollars. The budget places sexual assault services as 6th on a list of items to be restored with generated revenue.

The best available research tells us that crime victimization costs the United States \$450 billion annually (National Institute of Justice, 1996). Rape is the most costly of all crimes to its victims, with total estimated costs at \$127 billion a year (excluding the cost of child sexual abuse). In 2008, researchers estimated that each rape cost approximately \$151,423 (DeLisi, 2010).

Sexual abuse has a negative impact on children's educational attainment (MacMillan, 2000), later job performance (Anda et al., 2004), and earnings (MacMillan, 2000). Sexual violence survivors experience reduced income in adulthood as a result of victimization in adolescence, with a lifetime income loss estimated at \$241,600 (MacMillan, 2000). Sexual abuse interferes with women's ability to work (Lyon, 2002). Fifty percent of sexual violence victims had to quit or were forced to leave their jobs in the year following their assaults due to the severity of their reactions (Ellis, Atkeson, & Calhoun, 1981). In 2008, violence and abuse constituted up to 37.5% of total health care costs, or up to \$750 billion (Dolezal, McCollum, & Callahan, 2009).

In Washington State, 38 percent of all women have been victims of sexual assault in their lifetimes. Of these, 80 percent were victimized before the age of 18 (OCVA, 2001).

Sexual assault has an impact not just on victims, but also on their families, friends, and community.

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The need for these critical services is evident and funding must be protected. Any monies lost will jeopardize availability and continuity of these vital services in Washington. Victims and survivors deserve quality comprehensive services and support!

Sexual assault victim services in Washington State are funded with both federal and state dollars. The Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and Rape Prevention Education (RPE) funding complement the State's funding for these crucial services. Federal funding is based on the overall violent crime rate - while overall violent crime rates have decreased in recent years, rape and sexual assault rates remain significant.

There is a steady and ongoing need for additional monies to enhance services and meet rising costs of service provision. Advocates already do tremendous work with limited resources and cannot feasibly incur resource reduction. State monies must be protected and preserved so victims have ongoing access to services, support, and healing.

Loss of any sexual assault funding will mean that thousands of sexual assault victims, a majority of whom are children, will not receive prompt and comprehensive services to support their physical and mental health and well-being.

Funding received by community sexual assault centers is used to support direct services.* The majority of funding goes toward staffing these lifesaving services. Programs offering these services report that they will not have enough staffing resources to meet the demand for services such as 24-hour crisis response and advocate support at rape exams or legal proceedings, that support groups would be terminated, and that therapy services as well as outreach and prevention in local communities would be drastically reduced or eliminated.

Without sexual assault response advocates, victims are less likely to receive critical services (such as referrals to community-based services, filing of police reports, information about sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy) in the immediate aftermath of their attacks.

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Investment in victim services is essential and cost effective. When victims receive advocate-assisted services following victimization, they experience less secondary trauma or re-victimization as they interact with the medical and legal system. **This in turn results in higher prosecution rates, increased offender accountability, and reduced long-term cost to the community.**

An absence of helpful services and secondary victimization (negative effects from dealing with the aftermath of a crime) have been linked to increased psychological distress, physical health struggles, sexual risk-taking behaviors, self-blame, guilt, depression, and a reluctance to seek further help among sexual assault survivors. Over time, these consequences can take an emotional and financial toll on victims and the larger society.

Supportive, non-victim-blaming interventions provided immediately following a sexual assault can help to prevent complex, long-term health and mental health struggles among victims and survivors.

Funding sexual assault response centers is a cost-saving and fiscally responsible approach.

- Reject cuts to sexual assault monies.

Core Services provided by Community Sexual Assault Programs across the state:

Information & Referral: Trained advocates are available 24 hours a day to answer questions and to provide resources and referrals related to sexual abuse/assault.

Crisis Intervention: Trained advocates are available 24 hours a day to provide an immediate personal response to individuals presenting crises relating to sexual abuse/assault.

Legal, Medical, and General Advocacy: Advocates are available to provide legal, medical, and general information about sexual abuse/assault. Advocates are able to help clients identify their options in the different systems of care and can provide in-person support and advocacy services for clients in these settings. Advocates can act on behalf of clients to ensure their interests are represented and their rights are upheld.

System Coordination: Community Sexual Assault Programs work to coordinate the network of services that are available to survivors of sexual violence and their friends and family members.

Prevention Services: Community Sexual Assault Programs provide a wide array of services aimed at the prevention of sexual violence including: education & awareness, skill building and community development.

Specialized Services:

Therapy: Individual treatment to identify, understand and ameliorate the effects of sexual assault and to promote healing.

Support Groups: Regular facilitated meetings for victims or those close to victims, with a supportive and educational focus to provide emotional stability and promote the understanding of the impact of sexual assault.

Medical Evaluation: Specialized medical examination, consultation or interpretation to evaluate and treat medical problems resulting from sexual assault; to promote healing.

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