

SUPPORTING A STATEWIDE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



The Oregon Secretary of State office released the Advisory Report Breaking the Cycle: A Comprehensive Statewide Strategy Would Benefit Domestic Violence Victims, Survivors, and Advocates in October 2023. In response, the following recommendations have been compiled with feedback from The Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women, OCADSV, SATF, community-based service providers, family justice centers, and multi-disciplinary groups across the state.

In summary, funding a strong, healthy, and thriving continuum of closely linked community-based service providers across the state must be the starting point and foundation of any statewide strategy to address domestic violence.

Additionally, we need to increase financial resources that go directly to survivors, have strong support from the state, and focus on local, provider-led responses to domestic violence.

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FUND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services (ODSVS) is a state-designated funding source for over 60 certified, community-based, culturally specific, and Tribal domestic and sexual violence (DV/SA) programs across the state. These organizations have a demonstrated history of success providing 24/7 support, and culturally-responsive, trauma-informed services to survivors, plus have expert staff with lived experience and highly specialized skills. However, their capacity and impact are continually limited by lack of funding.

With adequate, ongoing funding these organizations are uniquely positioned to provide the increased services for survivors that are necessary to meet needs statewide.

- ODSVS has broad impact; it can be used for coordination efforts, shelter, safety planning, hotlines, crisis intervention and long-term support, inclusive outreach, children's services, client assistance, and more.
- We strongly recommend the investments made by the 2021 and 2023 legislature become current service level, not one-time funding.
- We seek an increase in this legislative session, along with a commitment to fully fund ODSVS in the long-term.

Survivor Housing Funds (SHF) is specific funding that has proven to help DV/SA survivors find and maintain safe housing. Survivors often face episodes of homelessness due to the violence, safety issues, and/or isolation. They often have few or no resources available when fleeing.

- This flexible funding mechanism has demonstrated a high degree of success statewide.
 - 86% survivors stating that having stable housing has helped them keep a job, get a job, attend school, receive medical/mental health, or manage child custody.
 - In addition to current service level funding we seek to increase access to assistance, including homeless prevention, safe emergency housing, and rehousing assistance for victims and children in need.

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INCREASE RESOURCES DIRECTLY TO SURVIVORS

When financial resources go directly to survivors, it supports their self-determination and elevates economic justice. Survivors know best what will keep themselves and their families safe, so flexible assistance is a critical tool for intervention. Yet these resources are far too limited to meet community needs.

- We strongly recommend an increase to Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) to support victims through the DHS system.
- Continue and increase funding for programs that provide financial resources directly to survivors via community-based organizations, such as Survivor Investment Program (SIP) funding and Survivor Housing Funds (SHF).
- Support initiatives such as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), which support survivors in building financial stability through matching.

3

SUPPORT COORDINATED LOCAL RESPONSES

Community-based service providers are best positioned to understand, elevate, and respond to the needs of survivors around the state. These organizations are supportive partners of coordinated community responses that intersect with systems, such as public health, public safety, criminal justice, and education. Funding coordination efforts is critical and will give organizations and collaborations the capacity to more effectively develop and enact regional and statewide strategies.

Bureaucratic solutions are costly, frequently create additional barriers along with administrative burdens on service providers, and have less direct impact on survivors' safety and well-being. A regional approach – led by direct service providers with understanding informed by frontline work – will ensure coordinated responses that tailor solutions to what survivors need most, and give rural and urban communities the ability to enact solutions that meet their differing needs.

- Multi-agency service-focused collaborations, such as Advocacy Centers and Family Justice Centers, are examples of this type of coordination in action, yet these proven models lack funding. Investing in local expert service providers, including operational support, creates capacity to work on collaborative efforts.
- Current coordination efforts are not effectively funded.
 - Examples include: Family Violence Coordinating Councils (FVCC), statewide strangulation prevention and response, regional domestic violence coordinators.

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IMPLEMENT STATEWIDE FOCUSED SOLUTIONS

One of the primary ways the state can support solutions for survivors is through stable, ongoing funding to give community-based service providers the resources they need to deliver critical services to survivors.

Additional statewide policy and standards that would be helpful include, in part:

- Disseminate useful statewide data. Currently, community-based service providers submit a wide breadth of data to various state and federal organizations.
 - Additional investment is needed for data collection by service providers, including administrative functions. This burden is higher on both smaller and rural organizations.
 - Throughout the state, data collection is inconsistent across jurisdictions.
 - Establish a process to review data trends and make policy recommendations.
 - Review and disseminate recommendations from fatality reviews that already occur, and take steps to ensure fatality reviews are happening statewide.
- Require consistent domestic violence judicial training.
- Ensure timely processing of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) exams and Strangulation Forensic Evidence Kits (SKITs) to help hold offenders accountable.
- Strengthen statewide prevention strategies by:
 - Ensuring prevention education is funded.
 - Conducting audits of schools to ensure adherence to state standards and best practices.