

Using STOP Funding to Meaningfully Address Sexual Violence



The Services * Training * Officers * Prosecutors (STOP) Violence Against Women Formula Grant works to improve the legal response to violent crimes against women and strengthen victim services responding to these crimes in all 56 states and territories. The funding is spread across four allocation areas—25% for law enforcement, 25% for prosecutors, 30% for victim services (of which at least 10% must be distributed to culturally specific community-based organizations), and 5% to state and local courts—with the remaining 15% for discretionary distribution within the enumerated purpose areas. Under the 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), states and territories must direct at least 20% of their STOP funding to meaningfully address sexual assault in at least two of the four allocation areas.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MEANINGFULLY ADDRESS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Nationwide, the response to and services for sexual violence victims/survivors typically receives fewer resources than the response to domestic violence. This disparity is one of the reasons why the 20% sexual assault set-aside was added to STOP. While domestic and sexual violence are similar and sometimes overlapping crimes, the needs of victims/survivors and the criminal legal response to these crimes is different. When these differences are not recognized, victims/survivors who experience sexual violence outside of an intimate partner violence context do not get the response they need and deserve ([Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative: Final Report](#)).

According to STOP federal regulations, “States should evaluate whether the interventions are tailored to meet the specific needs of sexual assault victims including ensuring that projects funded under the set aside have a legitimate focus on sexual assault and that personnel funded under such projects have sufficient expertise and experience on sexual assault” (28 CFR § 90.11 (4)(c)).

WAYS TO ENSURE A PROGRAM OR PROJECT IS MEANINGFULLY ADDRESSING SEXUAL ASSAULT INCLUDE:

- + Collaborating with sexual assault coalitions and service providers
- + Prioritizing programs and projects with the experience and training to address sexual violence
- + Emphasizing the need for programs and projects to focus on sexual violence outside of a domestic violence or intimate partner context (keeping in mind that comprehensive domestic violence programs already address intimate partner sexual violence)
- + Prioritizing programs and projects focused exclusively on sexual violence



WHAT SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS CAN BE FUNDED UNDER STOP?

SEXUAL VIOLENCE VICTIM SERVICES

STOP can be used to fund sexual violence specific victim advocacy services and legal assistance programs. This can and should include sexual violence specific services for underserved populations, culturally specific communities, and services for victims/survivors who are incarcerated. When considering the 10% culturally specific set aside, it is important to reserve some sexual assault specific funding to be included in this set aside as well.

STOP MAY BE USED TO FUND SEXUAL VIOLENCE SPECIFIC SERVICES, SUCH AS

- + Advocacy (general, medical, legal)
- + Helplines
- + Support groups
- + Counseling/therapy
- + Holistic healing¹
- + Survivor involvement in programs and awareness raising
- + Secondary survivor support
- + Systems advocacy
- + Community awareness
- + Prevention

¹ Under STOP, alternative forms of healing are permissible but require justification and research demonstrating their effectiveness.

ALLOCATIONS: VICTIM SERVICES, DISCRETIONARY

Prevention must be allocated under Discretionary and cannot be more than 5% of the total STOP grant. Prevention work does not count toward the sexual assault set aside.²

USEFUL RESOURCES:

- + [Comprehensive Services for Survivors of Sexual Violence](#)
- + [Lessons for Local Programs](#)
- + [Culturally Relevant Services for Tribal Communities and Communities Of Color](#)
- + [Mapping It Out: A Tool to Get Started on Providing Victim Services for Incarcerated Survivors](#)

SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC EXAMS

Sexual assault forensic exams are an important step for investigating and prosecuting sexual violence crimes, and may be the start of a victim/survivor accessing healing services. VAWA ensures that victims/survivors can access these exams at no cost, whether they report or law enforcement or not. STOP can be used to fund a variety of aspects when it comes to sexual assault forensic exams.

FUNDING ACTIVITIES MAY INCLUDE:

- + Training sexual assault medical forensic examiners. Trainings may include the collection and preservation of evidence, testifying as an expert witness, the neurobiology of sexual assault, and the impact of sexual assault on physical health.
- + Increasing forensic exam programs' ability to serve sexual violence victims/survivors with disabilities, older victims/survivors, and the LGBTQ+ community. This can include trainings and access to appropriate equipment, adaptations and interpretation.
- + Paying for health care provider time when the exam is provided by a specially trained examiner and the jurisdiction does not require the victim/survivor to seek insurance reimbursement to cover the cost of the exam.
- + Addressing sexual assault evidence collection kit accumulations ("backlogs"). This can include conducting an inventory of untested kits, developing protocols for addressing kit accumulation, and creating policies and protocols for victim notification.

ALLOCATIONS: LAW ENFORCEMENT, PROSECUTION, DISCRETIONARY

² *Office on Violence Against Women, Frequently Asked Questions About STOP Formula Grants, 2017.*

USEFUL RESOURCES:

- + [Preserving Survivor Choice: Forensic Compliance & LGBTQ+ Survivors of Sexual Violence](#)
- + [Understanding the Rape Kit Backlog Part 1, Part 2, Part 3](#)

CRIMINAL LEGAL RESPONSES

One of the primary purposes of STOP funding is to improve the criminal legal system's response to gender-based violence. Improving the criminal legal system can be difficult and it is important that the unique needs of sexual violence victims/survivors are addressed.

FUNDING ACTIVITIES MAY INCLUDE:

- + Training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts personnel to address sexual violence. This can include trainings on responding to sexual violence, neurobiology of sexual assault, investigating sexual assault, trauma-informed practices and interviewing, prosecuting sexual violence, best practices for dispatch, and best practices for patrol, as appropriate.
- + Policies, protocols, best practices, and training for responding to, investigating and prosecuting of sexual assault cases.
- + Increasing criminal justice responders' ability to serve sexual violence victims/survivors with disabilities, older victims/survivors, the LGBTQ+ community, Native victims/survivors, and immigrant victims/survivors of sexual violence. This could include trainings for criminal legal practitioners to understand the unique needs of different communities, such as trauma informed interviewing for survivors with disabilities, interpreter etiquette, U- and T-visas for immigrant survivors and more.
- + STOP could fund community liaisons, Tribal response, and community partnerships with organizations serving underserved and culturally specific survivors.
- + Specialized units addressing sexual violence in law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices.
- + Victim assistants specializing in sexual violence embedded in law enforcement agencies or prosecutors' offices.
- + Sexual violence programs for victims/survivors who are incarcerated, including providing forensic exams, developing investigation polices for outside law enforcement, creating a third-party reporting system for incarcerated victims/survivors, and bringing the state into compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act.

ALLOCATIONS: LAW ENFORCEMENT, PROSECUTION, COURTS, DISCRETIONARY

The appropriate allocation will depend on the project and who directly receives the funding. For the allocation to count toward Courts, the court must be the recipient of the funding.

USEFUL RESOURCES:

- + [Model Response to Sexual Violence for Prosecutors \(RSVP Model\): An Invitation to Lead](#)
- + [Responding to Sexual Violence in LGBTQ+ Communities: Law Enforcement Strategies and Considerations](#)
- + [The Prosecutors' Resource on Sexual Violence Cases Involving Victims With Intellectual Disabilities](#)
- + [Untangling the PREA Standards: Outside Reporting, Confidential Support, and Third-Party Reporting Fact Sheet](#)

MULTIDISCIPLINARY COORDINATION

Multidisciplinary collaboration is an important way to facilitate systems change among many different types of responders to sexual violence. Collaboration can help ensure the response is victim-centered, trauma-informed, offender-focused, and culturally responsive. Multidisciplinary efforts can include victim service providers, law enforcement, sexual assault forensic examiners, prosecutors, culturally specific organizations, community members, faith leaders, grassroots organizations, and more.

FUNDING ACTIVITIES MAY INCLUDE:

- + Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) and other forms of community collaboration. Funding may be used for team coordinators and member participation, training opportunities for team members, needs assessments, protocol development, translating materials, community education, and more.
- + Statewide multidisciplinary coordination, which could include statewide taskforces or the development of statewide guidelines or protocols for SARTs.

ALLOCATIONS: VICTIM SERVICES, LAW ENFORCEMENT, PROSECUTION, DISCRETIONARY

Funding may need to be prorated to the different allocation areas, depending on the structure of the specific project being funded

USEFUL RESOURCES:

- + [A Ten-Factor Framework for Sexual Assault Response Team Effectiveness](#)
- + [SART Toolkit](#)
- + [SARTs and Systems Change](#)

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative justice is an alternative way to seek justice and is based in indigenous practices. It shifts the concept of justice from looking at how a law was broken and how someone should be punished for the crime, to looking at who was harmed, what their needs are, and whose obligation is it to meet those needs. Restorative justice can facilitate healing and justice for victims/survivors of sexual violence in a way the traditional criminal legal response usually does not.

Restorative justice is an emerging practice to respond to sexual violence and can be structured in various ways. One common way is for restorative justice programs facilitated by community based organizations to receive referrals from victim service providers, law enforcement, and prosecution or self-referrals from victims/survivors. STOP may be used to fund these programs and to fund victim service providers who are providing advocacy to victims/survivors utilizing a restorative justice program.

ALLOCATIONS: DISCRETIONARY, VICTIM SERVICES

Given that restorative justice programs are an emerging practice, the Discretionary allocation is likely the most appropriate and these programs would not count toward the sexual assault set aside. It is important for STOP administrators to consult with the Office on Violence Against Women to determine the most appropriate allocations based on the type of project or program funded and whether the particular program is an allowable use of funds.

USEFUL RESOURCES:

- + [A Diversion Toolkit for Communities](#)

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Across all sexual assault projects and programs, it is important for STOP administrators to consider the training and technical assistance needs of the programs they fund. Funding state-wide training and technical assistance projects can be an important way to help

victim service providers, culturally specific programs, sexual assault forensic examiners, law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, and SARTs strengthen their services and response to sexual violence.

ALLOCATIONS: VICTIM SERVICES, LAW ENFORCEMENT, PROSECUTION, DISCRETIONARY



WHAT ARE SOME NEXT STEPS FOR STOP ADMINISTRATORS?

1

Learn about ways to improve the response to sexual violence through the STOP/SASP Administrator's Academy.

2

Take stock of how you currently use the sexual assault set aside, how you ensure meaningful programs and projects are funded, what gaps exist in the sexual assault response, and how you leverage other funding sources.

3

Use your implementation planning period and grant making strategies to determine your sexual assault funding priorities and criteria needed to fund a meaningful sexual assault project or program. Be specific about your priorities and criteria and consider how they work to improve the overall response to victims/survivors of sexual assault, promote systems change, and increase access for underserved and culturally specific victims/survivors.

4

Support subgrantees to meet their training and technical assistance needs, create opportunities for collaboration, and strengthen their capacity to respond to sexual violence.



QUESTIONS?

Please contact Victoria Riechers at vriechers@mncasa.org.

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