

S. 2259: FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT of 2019

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) supports life-saving services throughout the country through grants to states, tribal governments and territories, as well as to the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, FVPSA is the only federal funding source dedicated to providing support to domestic violence shelters and programs. FVPSA provides base core funding to support more than 1,600 local public, private, nonprofit and faith-based organizations and programs in their response to the urgent needs of over 1.3 million domestic violence victims and their children.

Through FVPSA, survivors receive services such as emergency shelter, crisis counseling, safety planning, assistance recovering from financial abuse and addressing housing insecurity. These programs also provide education and prevention programming to millions of community members annually. Additionally, FVPSA provides funds to state/territory domestic violence coalitions, a program dedicated to addressing the needs of children of domestic violence victims and technical assistance and training programs. .

FVPSA was first passed in 1984 and was mostly reauthorized in 2015. The *Family Violence Prevention and Services Improvement Act of 2019* makes the following enhancements:

- **Increases the funding authorization level to \$252 million** to respond to very low per-program funding levels and provide access to FVPSA funds for programs not currently funded.
 - Increases authorization levels to address inadequate federal funding for direct services across the country. These funds help providers maintain core staff and keep the doors open.
 - Makes adjustments to the current formula to address tribal sovereign relationships, re-structures the funding for the children's program grants and ensures access for tribal coalitions and the newly authorized culturally specific grant program.
 - Updates the authorization levels for prevention programs, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, the StrongHearts Native Helpline and the underserved grant programs.
- **Expands support for, and access, to culturally-specific programs.** Culturally-specific organizations are better equipped to address the complex, multi-layered challenges facing victims from racial and ethnic minority populations as they seek services and protections from abuse. In addition, culturally-specific programs often have challenges accessing FVPSA funding at the state and local levels due to the limited funding available and robust competition. This bill authorizes a new culturally-specific program to address these needs and incorporates related funding into the formula itself.
- **Strengthens the capacity of Indian tribes to exercise their sovereign authority** to more fully respond to domestic violence in their communities and authorizes funding for tribal coalitions and the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center.
 - Increases funding for tribes by allocating tribal grants as a set-aside to acknowledge the sovereign authority of tribes in the formula allocation.
 - Authorizes funding for tribal coalitions, which provide vital support to tribes and tribal domestic violence programs but are not currently authorized by statute to receive FVPSA funding.
 - Codifies the funded Alaska Native Women's Resource Center to reduce tribal disparities and ensure ongoing access to comprehensive technical assistance from culturally-relevant providers that address the unique and urgent needs of domestic violence victims in Alaska.
- **Meaningfully invests in prevention.** Brings evidence-informed, community-based prevention initiatives to more communities across the country.
 - Continues support for CDC's DELTA Program, which provides competitive funds to design, test and evaluate innovative domestic violence and dating violence prevention models.
 - Authorizes new grants of up to \$150,000 to each state, territorial and tribal coalition to prevent domestic violence and collaborate with other agencies.

- Authorizes new grants to local community-based programs to conduct effective prevention efforts, particularly those serving culturally-specific or traditionally underserved communities.
- **Strengthens and updates the National Domestic Violence Hotline and hotline services for underrepresented populations**, including American Indians, Alaskan Natives and Deaf victims of domestic and dating violence.
 - Codifies the StrongHearts Native Helpline, which addresses the culturally-specific needs and specific jurisdictional issues facing native survivors and survivors living on tribal lands. The Helpline opened its doors in 2017 through a collaboration between the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center and the National Domestic Violence Hotline.
 - Updates the National Domestic Violence Hotline to include emerging technological needs, such as digital services.
- **Creates a new underserved populations grant program.** The lack of resources and severity of violence is often heightened for survivors living at the margins, such as those living in rural communities, individuals with disabilities, older adults, those identifying with faith-based communities, youth and others. These underserved populations are often reluctant to seek assistance, and when they do, they frequently look for services and support in their immediate communities. This bill creates a grant program for family centers, youth centers, senior centers, community-based organizations or vocational organizations to meet the needs of these survivors.
- **Continues to support national technical assistance (TA) centers, including the Alaskan Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence**, and their work to develop effective policy, practice, research and cross-system collaborations.
- **Updates provisions and definitions** to ensure access to services for all survivors, better align with related programs and reflect evolving practices in order to provide uniform guidance to those working to end domestic violence.
 - Streamlines the multiple terms of domestic violence, dating violence and family violence, which have evolved over time, to reflect our common understanding of what constitutes domestic violence and better outlines those who are eligible for FVPSA-supported services.
 - Updates language to reflect current practices and provide a reference to other statutes to ensure common understanding across different federal programs.