

Press Release

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Massive Funding Cuts To Domestic Violence Services Threaten Community Safety

Domestic violence services across Washington State are facing a massive 23% to 30% cut in state funding contracts, to go into effect July 1. These are the life-saving services that every community across the state counts on, including: emergency housing options for survivors of abuse; crisis lines; and civil legal assistance. At a time when demand for services has never been greater, deep funding cuts will reduce programming and options available, putting survivors, their children, and our communities at risk.

Domestic violence emergency shelter and services are supported by a combination of federal and state general funds. The primary federal fund source for survivor and crime victim services in Washington State (funding from the Victims of Crime Act), has dropped by \$50 million or 38% in recent years. At the same time, state general funding for domestic violence has remained flat for over twenty years despite the increasing need and cost of providing services. Survivors of violence need safe options and support; the programs meeting those needs cannot sustain this trend of more requests with less support. Service providers across the state report resorting to waitlists for services.

“Cutting domestic violence emergency sheltering and crisis services funding by a quarter to a third is not safe for any community,” said Judy Chen, Executive Director of the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “We appreciate that state lawmakers stepped up and did the right thing by adding short-term funding for the last two years. Now it’s time for a long-term solution.”

A snapshot of escalating need in recent years:

- Children’s advocacy centers saw a double-digit increase in requests for services statewide, between 15-43%
- On a single day in 2020, 75% of Washington State domestic violence programs served 2,306 survivors; 603 requests for help went unmet
- Sexual assault programs saw double-digit increase in requests for services statewide; King County increased by 19%
- Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault have experienced twice as many civil legal problems each year

A network of coalitions, including the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Office of Civil Legal Aid, Children's Advocacy Centers of Washington, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, and the Washington Sexual Assault Working Group, have come together to strategize how to strengthen the safety net for survivors. This group has spent three years pinpointing these funding gaps and identifying long-term solutions. They have just [issued a request](#) to Washington State lawmakers for a support plan that will stabilize essential survivor services.

Trauma-informed advocacy services are proven to increase safety, reduce further victimization, and help survivors and their children heal. Our communities cannot afford cuts to these life-saving programs.

About SafePlace of Olympia

SafePlace advocates have offered safety and support to survivors of both sexual assault and domestic violence since being established as a nonprofit 501 (C) (3) in 1981 by the merger of Rape Relief and the Women's Shelter Services, two programs operated by the YWCA since 1973 and 1976, respectively. Consistently striving to put an end to sexual and domestic violence through crisis intervention and education, SafePlace works as an advocate for personal and society change. With a board of directors, staff, and volunteers operating the agency, we at SafePlace are able to sustain our purpose of empowering survivors to make decisions about their lives through means of support services, resources, and readily available information.

Since our inception, we have been both a dual domestic violence and sexual assault provider agency in Thurston County. We are a private non-profit organization, and proud to state our sexual assault program is one of the oldest in the nation. A board of directors, staff, and trained volunteers operate the agency while driving our general purpose of empowering survivors to make decisions about their lives. By offering supportive services, resources and information, SafePlace continues to stand out as Thurston County's leader in helping survivors thrive.

We believe that all people have the right to make their own decisions regarding sexual and reproductive matters, finances, education, religion, and employment. Each person is wonderfully unique, our strengths come in many forms, and we contribute in different ways. Only by honoring our differences and appreciating our various perspectives can we find harmony.

To learn more, please visit <https://www.safeplaceolympia.org/>