

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault programs have been flat funded for over 20 years

Services have been chronically underfunded; significant state investment is needed to meet the rapidly rising needs to retain staff and ensure quality services remain available for .

The Impact on Our Local Community:

In addition, there is a proposed cut on SafePlace's Core State Funding for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services of 23% -30% starting July 1st. Of SafePlace's funding, approximately 70% is public funds from grants.

To **SafePlace** alone, this will mean a **potential reduction of up to \$272,775** to both primary funding sources for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence services in Thurston County. The proposed reductions in funding will severely impact DV and SA services that are desperately needed in our community. **As an example of the underfunded impact, in 2022, our confidential shelter for domestic violence survivors had to turn away, on average, 94 people per month.**

The State Impact:

These cuts are expansive, impacting all Domestic Violence Programs and Sexual Assault Programs receiving this funding in every county, as well as similar cuts to all Children's Advocacy Centers and Civil Legal Services throughout Washington State.

The request to prevent these cuts and make Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Service stable for our state and support a permanent fix in the upcoming Biennial Budget state-wide for the program services state-wide, an **investment of \$132 million** is needed over the next two-year period.

Please support our request to support victims of DV and SA.

If you would like to support SafePlace and other programs like SafePlace, please consider reaching out to your state senator and representatives and share your thoughts.

The contact information for your legislator is provided in this link: ([who your state representatives are](#)); you can also email your legislator [here](#).

Legislators rarely hear from their constituents, so calling, emailing, writing, or visiting your legislator can make a significant difference regarding topics you want them to address.

For additional information, please click on the links below:

- Our coalitions 2023 Session Guide: [2023 Session Guide](#)
- Other related coalition information: [news post](#)
- Register for DV Legislative Day: [register for Advocacy Days, February 6-8](#)

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SafePlace Survivor Testimonies:

Tia's Story:

Tia took the opportunity to leave while her abuser was sleeping. She quietly left the house with just the clothes she was wearing and drove away with nowhere to go, and only a quarter tank of gas. Tia was scared.

While driving, she noticed a yard sign with a phone number on it that read "24/7 Helpline". For so long, Tia had been manipulated. She stared at her screen, doubting herself. It was hard for her to determine if the abuse was "bad enough" to call a helpline. Finally, she called.

Immediately she was connected to an advocate that assured her the services of SafePlace are confidential and free. Tia explained what she had been going through, and that she had nowhere to go. The advocate gave her validation she needed and told her about availability at the SafePlace shelter. Tia told the advocate she felt like a "zombie" and that she was so disconnected from what reality was, that she was almost functioning robotically. After arriving at the shelter, Tia was greeted by a Shelter employee. She was shown to her room and for the first time in over a year, she felt safe and slept all through the night.

Kenya's Story:

It was 3rd period and Kenya walked into her home economics class. Instead of her teacher up at the front of the class, it was a SafePlace Advocate. The bell rang and everyone took their seats. The Advocate introduced themselves to the class and explained what the next hour would look like. Kenya felt uneasy. She had been uncomfortable with the way her boyfriend was treating her. He would show up unannounced at her cheer practices, and even her home. She felt "watched" by him.

After the hour learning about boundaries and consent, Kenya knew that she needed help. She stayed late after class to talk to the advocate. The advocate gave her the 24/7 SafePlace helpline number and assured her that she had options. Because of the support that Kenya received from SafePlace Advocates, she felt empowered to speak up. She told her parents about the situation and was able to break things off with her boyfriend. After she found resources and support with SafePlace, Kenya found a new passion. She wanted to be there for other students experiencing the same things. She joined the SafePlace SPEAK program and has made an impact with other students within her own school.

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Meaghan's Story:

Meaghan came from a small town with very few job opportunities. She was having trouble providing a stable life for her young children. When her partner accepted a job in a new town, Meaghan was under the impression that their financial burdens would be eased. She thought she'd be able to hire professional childcare and she could be free to again pursue her own goals outside of the home.

Once they had relocated, Meaghan's partner began restricting her access to the bank accounts. He had changed the passwords, "lost" debit cards, and forced Meaghan to budget bills and any spending by giving her an "allowance." Meaghan was essentially held financially captive, and each time she fought for her independence her partner would retaliate with threats of violence against her and the kids.

Meaghan reached out to SafePlace's Helpline after finding the courage to leave her partner. She asked for help with transitional housing while she searched for employment. One advocate, in particular, was exceptionally supportive, easing Meaghan into transitional housing and strategizing a safety and financial plan, specifically tailored to her and her children's current and future needs. With the help of her advocate, she not only found a safe home environment, but Meaghan was able to use part of her first paycheck to buy her own cell phone. One of the very first texts she sent was to her SafePlace advocate, reading:

"Thank you so much. Every time I talk to you, I feel like it's going to be OK. You're a breath of fresh air."

Katie's Story:

*Katie worked her way through college to pay for nursing school, and upon graduation she started her career as a registered nurse in a nearby emergency clinic. Katie was not only skilled in how she helped others in need in her community, she was also a devoted mother to her two daughters.

While raising her family, Katie's husband had become increasingly verbally abusive, hinting at and threatening an escalation to physical violence. Before Katie could come up with a safety plan for her and her children, the threats turned to reality and Katie's husband made the calculated decision he knew would cause her the most forms of pain- he broke and crushed both of her hands, crippling her not only physically and emotionally but financially as well, potentially destroying her medical career.

SafePlace was Katie's first call once she was out of immediate danger. Still reeling from her injuries and now faced with the daunting task of avoiding homelessness and navigating a secure future for her family, she was connected with SafePlace's housing program. In America, 56% of unmet requests from domestic violence programs are for housing, and SafePlace was dedicated to keeping Katie from becoming another statistic. Today, Katie and her children are still on the road to recovery, but with a brightly lit and supportive path. She recently reached out to share the following note: "...I had little options and no hope. My spirit felt crushed, and my body was physically crippled with injuries. I felt

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hopeless. The help that you extended to me meant much more than bills and rent being paid. Your help gave me hope and has been part of my healing process. Without the help given by SafePlace, I don't know how I would have begun to pull through such a horrible and tragic time. You made it possible for me to keep a roof over our head and provide for my kids. I'm still healing, and it will take a while to be 100% again, but I wanted to express my gratitude. Thank you so much for helping me."

Deena's Story:

Deena struggled for years under the verbal, physical, and financial control of her children's father. Deena packed in the night and fled from motel to motel, yet her abuser was seemingly always just steps behind her. Deena called SafePlace late into the evening, and wasting no time, was connected with an advocate to quickly find permanent, secure housing. Within a short period of time, Deena was feeling safe and confident enough in her new home to seek legal consultation regarding protective orders with her advocate by her side. Deena, now free from danger, was able to finish her college degree while working to support her family. Even with her full workload, Deena reached out to her SafePlace advocate with the following note, hoping for the opportunity to give back and provide the same solace to others that she received with SafePlace:

"I am practically without words to describe my gratitude and appreciation I have for you and this agency. There's a very real likelihood that myself and children wouldn't be here without your dedication and support. Please, if there's ever an opportunity for me to donate my time or even just talk to another survivor in need, I'd love the opportunity and please keep me in mind. I have no doubt that sharing my story will help others cope, hopefully my happy ending will give others inspiration to get out and seek a new life as well."

Jared's Story:

"Jared" had been quietly living with his abusive spouse for 10 years. From the outside, him and his wife appeared to be a happy, healthy couple, but the fear of embarrassment of admitting to being physically assaulted by his female partner kept Jared from ever telling his friends or family about their true relationship. Jared hid the bruises for as long as he could, but ultimately knew the best life for him and his two younger boys meant leaving his violent household. To do so, he needed to make the difficult decision to share for the first time the truth about his abuse and made SafePlace his first call.

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His initial request was simply to receive gas cards in order to leave the city, however once he began opening up more about his experiences and working with an advocate, Jared decided to stay within the county to continue accessing SafePlace's support. Within just 3 weeks, Jared was able to secure a new living situation with help from our Housing Program, received free legal support, and even attended several support group meetings to share his path with others. What was intended to be just a hushed request for a gas card, not offering much more in exposing his painful experiences, turned into a life changing opportunity thanks to Jared's trust in sharing his voice to the right people.