

Violence Against Women Act 2005: Sexual Assault Services Program

What is the Sexual Assault Services Program?

As part of VAWA 2005 (Public Law No: 109-162), the Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP) was initiated to provide assistance to victims of sexual violence. Specifically, SASP will provide funds for service providers and make resources available to state, territorial and tribal sexual assault coalitions who work to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of local rape crisis centers.

The Current Landscape

Approximately 1,315 rape crisis centers nationwide provide critical support to victims in their recovery from sexual violence. Without a consistent and specialized funding stream for direct services, rape crisis centers are stretched to the limit - trying to meet increased demand for services with reduced government funding. Rape crisis centers need:

- **Resources to meet the increased demand for services** - additional staff are needed to provide medical and legal accompaniments, short- and long-term individual counseling, support groups for victims and their families and operate 24-hour hotlines.
- **Resources and skills to meet the needs of special communities** - educational programs as well as direct services including on-site translators and cultural sensitivity training is needed to assist underserved populations. Transportation is needed to meet the needs of rural victims.
- **Public awareness of available services** - many victims are unaware of the services available to them through local rape crisis centers.

By creating a desperately needed federal funding stream for direct services, SASP will assure rape crisis centers have the necessary funds to continue providing vital services to all victims of sexual violence.

How will SASP funds be utilized?

SASP would authorize the Attorney General to award grants to assist tribes, territories and states in their efforts to provide services to adult and minor sexual assault victims and their family and household members.

Specifically, grants could be used for:

- **General intervention and advocacy** including accompaniment through medical, criminal justice and social support systems and related assistance.
- **Training and technical assistance** relating to sexual assault for various organizations, including government, law enforcement, courts, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations and professionals working in legal services, social services and healthcare.
- **Intervention and related assistance for culturally specific organizations** to address sexual violence.

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