

NNEDV

16th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report

NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

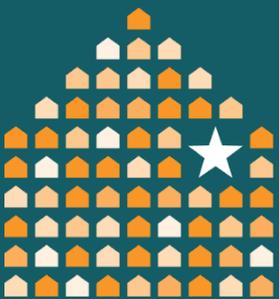


24-HOUR SURVEY
of Domestic Violence
Shelters and Services

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We offer our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the staff at the 1,536 programs who participated in this national count of local domestic violence services. By sharing information about your lifesaving work, you are shining a light on the needs of survivors and advocates.



NNEDV
NATIONAL NETWORK
TO END DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE

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The 16th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report is made possible by:





DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNTS REPORT

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

March 2022

On behalf of the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), an organization dedicated to creating a social, political, and economic environment in which domestic violence no longer exists, I am pleased to share our 16th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report. Founded over 30 years ago, NNEDV represents the 56 U.S. state and territorial coalitions against domestic violence and is a leading national voice against violence.

We began conducting this survey sixteen years ago to provide accurate information about how many domestic violence survivors use shelters and services. Each report tells the uplifting stories of survivors receiving lifesaving assistance and the advocates who work every day to end domestic violence. It also shares the tragic stories of survivors who cannot get help and are still in danger because resources are out of reach. Over time, we have worked to ensure that this report is used to connect the needs reported by the field to corresponding federal and state policy, funding, and other solutions. We tell these stories to inform and educate the public and policymakers at all levels about the urgent needs for help and public policy changes.

Our survey day took place on September 9, 2021, nearly a year and a half after COVID-19 began ravaging the nation. Programs and survivors are still navigating the changes and challenges brought on by the pandemic—now moving from handling it as a short-term crisis to more long-term change management. This report captures both the resiliency of survivors and programs and the intense impact the pandemic is still having on them and their needs. They are also feeling the impact of ongoing racial injustice, state-sanctioned violence, natural disasters, and a devastating economic downturn that have exacerbated their struggles and brought to the forefront their unique needs. Our survey response rate was slightly lower this year than in previous years as we adjusted to a new data collection system and as staff have been stretched across many competing priorities. We recognize and appreciate each and every program's hard work this year, whether they were able to participate or not.

NNEDV's Domestic Violence Counts Report seeks to shed light on the tireless work of advocates at local domestic violence programs to make sure that work—serving survivors—is seen by those who can help make more resources and options available. This past year, we continued to see the heroic efforts of staff in programs as they grappled with another year of the pandemic, an economic downturn, horrific acts of violence across the country, and a divisive political climate that threatened both their funding and survivors' well-being.

Despite their efforts, domestic violence programs simply do not have enough funding to engage in the necessary work to address victims' needs. As our report outlines, many programs are unable to meet thousands of requests for services every day. Worse still, programs have continued to redirect existing funding to items needed to deal with the pandemic—personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning equipment, and technology—thereby reducing funding available to provide survivors with transportation or safe places to stay when shelters were full.



The pandemic further exacerbated existing barriers to safety for survivors, including a lack of housing, intense needs for hotel and motel stays, childcare, and economic security. Survivors of color experienced these barriers more acutely, because of the disparate impact of burdens they already bear due to racism and systemic discrimination that can put resources farther out of reach.

This report provides a snapshot of the services met and unmet on a single day. On September 9, 2021, local programs were unable to meet 9,444 requests for services—primarily requests for housing or emergency shelter—because programs lacked sufficient resources. These numbers are distressing on their own, but the true scope of the problem is worse: many survivors had limited access to help because of the pandemic or the dearth of services in their communities; we also lack data from overstretched programs.

As detailed in this report, this past year, we have achieved incredible federal legislative successes on some of our top priorities that will begin to address some of these survivor needs. However, for survivors, we must, and can do better. With your help, we will continue to encourage the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress to ensure all survivors get the support they need.

We discuss our recommendations in more detail later in this report; they include:

- ★ Launching and implementing the Administration’s National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, to ensure a comprehensive, coordinated, whole-of-government approach;
- ★ Increasing essential funding for domestic and sexual violence programs in Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations;
- ★ Centering the needs of survivors from Communities of Color in all legislation, appropriations, and policymaking;
- ★ Reauthorizing and improving the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA);
- ★ Enacting workplace protections that promote financial security for survivors;
- ★ Enacting policies that promote economic justice for survivors;
- ★ Advancing access to safe, affordable housing for survivors;
- ★ Strengthening survivor-based immigration protections; and
- ★ Expanding and implementing relief funds and policies.

Visit NNEDV.org/TakeAction to join us in calling for a strong federal response to domestic violence.

With gratitude,



Deborah J. Vagins

Deborah J. Vagins
President and CEO
National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)





DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNTS REPORT NATIONAL SUMMARY

On September 9, 2021, **1,536** out of **1,914 (80%)** identified domestic violence programs in the United States participated in a national count of domestic violence services conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). The survey also includes data from the National Domestic Violence Hotline and NNEDV’s WomensLaw Email Hotline. In 2021, frontline advocates continued to navigate unforeseen challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises. The following figures represent the information shared by the participating programs about the services they provided during the 24-hour survey period.

70,032 Victims Served in One Day

38,608 adult and child victims of domestic violence found refuge in emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotels, motels, or other housing provided by local domestic violence programs.

31,424 non-residential adult and child victims received supportive services including counseling, legal advocacy, support groups, and transportation.

Table 1: Top Services Provided on 9/9/21	% of Programs Providing Services
Emergency Shelter	71%
Children’s Support or Advocacy	53%
Court Accompaniment or Legal Advocacy	52%
Support/Advocacy Related to Housing/Landlord	51%
Transportation	47%
Support/Advocacy Related to Mental Health	45%

20,701 Hotline Calls Received

Domestic violence hotlines are lifelines for victims in danger, providing support, information, safety planning, and resources via phone, chat, text, and email. Local, state, and territorial hotline staff received **18,970** contacts; NNEDV’s WomensLaw legal Email Hotline received **33** emails; and the

National Domestic Violence Hotline received **1,698** contacts. Altogether, all local, state, territorial, and national hotline staff received an average of more than **14** contacts every minute of the survey day.

16,240 People Engaged in Trainings

On the survey day, local domestic violence programs provided trainings or public education sessions to **16,240** people in communities across the United States. Advocates provided **796** trainings addressing topics like domestic violence prevention and early intervention. Community education is essential to raising awareness about domestic violence and promoting the resources available to victims.

9,444 Unmet Requests for Services

Victims made **9,444** requests for services—including emergency shelter, housing, transportation, childcare, legal representation, and other support needs—that programs could not provide because they lacked the resources. Approximately **64%** of these unmet requests were for housing and emergency shelter.

Housing has only grown as a need for victims, made worse by the economic and eviction crises brought on by the pandemic. Overall, there is a tremendous need for increased funding to ensure programs can provide comprehensive services to all survivors seeking help while working toward preventing violence in their communities.

✂ **From a Massachusetts advocate: “When survivors are finally able to connect with someone who is kind, believes them, and helps them, it can make all the difference. But there is much more demand than there are programs, even in our highly resourced state.”**



“COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on Latino survivors and **has amplified the many barriers they were already facing.** Many of these survivors are considered essential workers, but they were not given any proper protection or support.”

- IOWA
ADVOCATE

SPOTLIGHT ON COVID-19

Pandemic Exacerbates Existing Barriers to Safety for Survivors and Strains Already-Limited Resources for Programs

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to strain resources for domestic violence programs and reduce options for survivors. Existing barriers to safety for survivors, like a lack of housing, childcare, and economic security, were further exacerbated as the pandemic extended into the second year. Survivors of color experienced these barriers more acutely because of ongoing oppression, racism, and systemic discrimination that often prevent them from accessing the resources they need.

Ongoing virtual court hearings and delays as courts worked through backlogs from earlier closures left many survivors feeling as though legal help was out of reach. For example, many survivors will likely be playing catch-up in the years to come because many courts were not accepting petitions for matters deemed “non-emergency filings,” such as violations of custody or divorce orders—often critical pieces of survivors’ journeys to safety.

Many shelters are operating at a reduced capacity and providing more digital services to keep survivors safe from the virus, at an increased cost for programs. The pandemic forced many domestic

violence programs to make substantial investments to ensure they could keep their doors open and safely provide services by procuring PPE, upgrading technology to provide digital services, paying for hotel nights or rental assistance for survivors, and addressing other urgent needs.

While these investments are critical to the safety of survivors and frontline workers, they are straining program resources, resulting in fewer available services and interventions. For smaller programs, this increased spending can be catastrophic for their budgets in both the current year and into the next.

“We have incurred significant, unexpected expenses to provide safe services and shelter during the pandemic. All of these changes have been vital, but they are costing us upwards of \$38,000 per week.”
- Ohio advocate

“We have spent more money assisting survivors with rent, utilities, and food than ever before. Typically, we spend \$12,000 to \$18,000 per year. Between 2020 and 2021, we spent about \$130,000.”
- Oregon advocate

In a Single Day...

On September 9, 2021, NNEDV conducted its 16th Annual Domestic Violence Counts survey, a one-day, unduplicated count of domestic violence services requested and received across the United States. This report summarizes the findings, including the number of people accessing services, the services requested, the number of unmet requests, and the experiences of survivors and advocates.¹

NNEDV conducted the 2021 Domestic Violence Counts survey as participating local programs navigated the second year of the pandemic. Of the 1,914 domestic violence programs and shelters identified² nationwide, 1,536 programs (80%) in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands participated. For sixteen years, the Domestic Violence Counts Report has been the premier trusted source of data on the lifesaving services domestic violence advocates provide to survivors every day.

In just one day, 70,032 adults and children received essential domestic violence services. Emergency shelters, transitional and other housing programs, hotels, and motels provided refuge for 38,608 adult and child victims, and an additional 31,424 adults and children received advocacy through non-residential services, such as counseling, childcare, and legal advocacy. Local, state, territorial, and national domestic violence advocates received 20,701 hotline contacts; local, state, and territorial advocates provided 796 trainings on domestic violence prevention, early intervention, and related topics to 16,240 people.

The Domestic Violence Counts report also provides sobering data about the requests for services that go unfulfilled. Unfortunately, 9,444 requests for services were unmet on September 9, 2021, due to a lack of resources, leaving survivors without the support they need. Programs continue to face insufficient funding at the federal, tribal, state, territorial, and local levels. This funding can mean the difference between staying with an abusive partner or having the ability to safely escape.

More funding and resources are urgently needed. Many programs have seen ongoing increases in requests for shelter, housing, financial help, and other assistance as living costs continued to rise. Many survivors also need access to low-barrier cash assistance and tax credits. Annual and supplemental funds provided by FVPSA, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's "DV Bonus Funds" are essential federal funding streams for victim services.

This past year, NNEDV celebrated the signing of two of our top legislative priorities: the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2022. The VOCA Fix will replenish and restore a critical funding source that had previously decreased over time, addressing the ongoing financial crisis that put thousands of local programs in jeopardy. The VAWA reauthorization will provide survivors, programs, and communities with much-needed resources for housing, legal assistance, alternatives to criminal responses, and prevention programming; it also includes new economic justice provisions, strengthens non-discrimination law for survivors of all genders, creates an LGBTQ+ services program, and restores tribal jurisdiction so tribes can hold non-Native perpetrators accountable.

However, additional efforts are still necessary to improve system-wide responses, eliminate barriers to safety and justice for all survivors, and ensure that no program is ever forced to close their doors when faced with a decrease in funding.

¹ Quotes have been edited for length and to protect victims' and survivors' anonymity.

² For a local program to qualify for participation in the Domestic Violence Counts survey, one of its primary purposes must be domestic violence services.

VICTIMS SERVED



REAL STORIES

“We supported a survivor with a wide range of needs. She told us: ‘This shelter has been a place of huge blessings. I arrived with my life upside-down and I get to leave with a sense of order and hope for a better future.’”

– Florida advocate

“The pandemic has had a terrible impact on survivors and their children, and we’ve seen an increase in severity and intensity of cases. We expect further funding cuts to come just when people need us the most.”

– New York advocate

Domestic Violence Programs Provide Refuge and Advocacy in Times of Crisis

As the pandemic continued to strain housing, employment, and other resources, local programs worked around the clock to offer options for survivors. Many abusers choose to leverage economic stressors in order to further exert power and control over partners, and advocates can offer invaluable support to survivors as they navigate these and other challenges.

Table 2: Victims Served on 9/9/21	Emergency Shelter	Transitional or Other Housing	Hotel/Motel Stay	Non-Residential Services	Total
Adults	8,887	8,069	1,429	25,963	44,332
Children	8,671	10,297	1,255	5,461	25,684
Total	17,558	18,366	2,684	31,424	70,032

Answering the Call

Domestic violence hotlines are often the first point of contact for survivors seeking help, providing desperately needed information and support. On September 9, 2021, local, state, territorial, and national domestic violence hotlines received 20,701 calls from victims of domestic violence in a single day (averaging nearly 863 calls per hour or more than 14 calls per minute).

Shelter and Housing Services Provide Safety

Access to safe, affordable, long-term housing options is a critical need for survivors escaping abuse. The pandemic reduced available shelter space at programs, forcing many survivors to stay with abusive partners. Enduring childcare concerns, pay inequity, the occupational segregation of women (especially Women of Color) in low-wage, front line jobs, and other economic factors³ have continued to impact survivors’ ability to maintain income and secure stable housing for themselves and their families.

Creating Pathways from Shelter to Permanent Safe Housing

For survivors in emergency shelter, the path to long-term housing can be difficult. Financial abuse, which occurs in 99% of domestic violence cases,⁴ often results in ruined credit, making it difficult to obtain a lease or mortgage where credit checks are required.

Many domestic violence programs offer transitional housing, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, or other affordable housing options to help survivors access safety and stability. Meeting survivors’ housing needs requires meaningful, sustained partnerships, along with substantial federal, tribal, state, territorial, and local public-private investments to create affordable housing in communities. These partnerships must also work together to address barriers and challenges—including those faced by survivors of color, who are overrepresented in homeless populations due to structural racism and other forms of discrimination.

Additionally, survivors frequently face housing waitlists in their search for permanent housing because of a lack of safe, affordable options in their region,

³ Fry, Richard, “Some Gender Disparities Widened in the U.S. Workforce during the Pandemic,” Pew Research Center (2022).

⁴ Adams, Adrienne, “Measuring the Effects of Domestic Violence on Women’s Financial Well-Being,” University of Wisconsin-Madison, Center for Financial Security (2011).

highlighting shortages that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. A Massachusetts advocate shared the stark impact: “One of our advocates spoke with a survivor in need of affordable housing. Most programs are closed for applications right now, and the wait list is about ten years long.”

Opening the Door

On September 9, 2021: Adult and child victims found refuge wherever programs had space, in emergency shelters (17,558 victims); transitional and other housing programs (18,366 victims); and hotels and motels (2,684 victims). Seventy-one percent of reporting programs provided emergency shelter, 42% provided transitional or other housing services, and 28% provided hotel or motel stays.

A Nebraska advocate shared: “We spoke to a survivor who had been sleeping in her car with her children. We were able to provide them with a hotel stay, food, and other basics. She called once they were settled into their hotel room to say that, for the first time in a long time, they felt safe.”

Comprehensive and Compassionate Advocacy

Beyond safe housing, the path to healing and rebuilding after abuse is made easier with the help of trained, compassionate advocates who let victims know they are not alone. Domestic violence survivors need supportive, non-judgmental care that does not punish, shame, or stigmatize them. Domestic violence services emphasize victims’ strengths beyond the trauma they have experienced. Trained advocates follow survivors’ leads in developing individualized safety plans and connecting them with other community resources and services.

An advocate in Indiana shared: “Because our advocates use a strength-based perspective and a trauma-informed lens—and don’t tell survivors what to do or try to control their lives—they are able to offer options so the survivors can make decisions on their own and feel validated in being able to do so.”

Local programs provide vital support and services, including legal advocacy, counseling, job-readiness services, and help with safety planning, transportation, childcare, and overcoming financial abuse. This range of services can include initiatives

tailored to the needs of diverse communities that often face increased barriers to safety and justice. Many programs provide services that are culturally sensitive, culturally specific, and tailored to support survivors who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color; LGBTQ+ survivors; immigrant survivors; and survivors who are experiencing mental illness or addiction or living with disabilities. To fully serve all survivors, programs need increased resources to address structural barriers to safety and to expand specialized services and outreach. More funding is always needed for culturally specific services.

A Michigan advocate shared: “An Indigenous survivor was looking for a culturally specific shelter, but the only providers in the state were too far away. We were able to secure a hotel stay for her and her family, but the lack of culturally diverse domestic violence shelters continues to be a barrier.”

Helping Survivors Heal

On September 9, 2021: Overall, 31,424 people received essential non-residential services.

Table 3: Top Non-Residential Services Provided on 9/9/21	% of Programs Providing Services
Children’s Support or Advocacy	53%
Court Accompaniment or Legal Advocacy	52%
Support/Advocacy Related to Housing/Landlord	51%
Transportation	47%
Support/Advocacy Related to Mental Health	45%
Support/Advocacy Related to Public Benefits/TANF/Welfare	42%
Bilingual Advocacy	36%
Prevention and/or Educational Programs	34%

From an advocate in North Dakota: “We worked with a client who had spent nearly half her life with her abuser, until she found the courage to walk in our door for therapy and find her voice, which had been belittled and criticized for so long. She tells us often how thankful she is that we supported her during her darkest moments.”



Prevention Through Education: Ending Domestic Violence Starts with Outreach at the Community Level

Ending domestic violence requires investments in prevention, including community education and outreach to help raise awareness, change social norms, and reduce abuse. Education is a powerful prevention tool to help people identify signs of abuse, resources for seeking help, and the hallmarks of healthy relationships.

Domestic violence advocates use specialized trainings to help professionals in many fields— who work with survivors—gain knowledge about trauma-informed care and the nuances of survivor-centered service provision. When social service employees, judges, first responders, attorneys, and medical professionals understand domestic violence, they are better equipped to support survivors.

A California advocate said: “Our staff works to help survivors rebuild networks of support that have frayed and fallen apart over many years, or never existed at all. Each success is the result of a community, because only together can we rebuild lives.”

Forging Community Connections and Expanding Knowledge

On September 9, 2021: Advocates provided 796 trainings to 16,240 students, parents, teachers, law enforcement officers, mental health providers, attorneys, child protective services employees, and other professionals. While fewer trainings took place than in pre-COVID times, programs still succeeded in finding ways to reach their communities.

An advocate in Hawaii shared: “We have increased our virtual parenting classes and provided online videos. This has allowed more parents to attend from around the Island, since we are in a very rural setting with limited resources.”



REAL STORIES

“After years of abuse, we helped a survivor and her children with safety planning, housing, and counseling. With tears in her eyes, she repeatedly thanked us and said she was feeling hopeful for the first time in a long time.”

– Kentucky advocate

“We need more resources for victims, including housing and support for mental health and substance abuse. It’s so hard when we are able to help them through the crisis, but then there are limited resources to help them be self-sufficient.”

– Alabama advocate

Substance Abuse Services Improve Outcomes for Survivors

As the nation grappled with more than 100,000 drug overdose deaths between April 2020 and April 2021,⁵ domestic violence advocates saw this broader trend disproportionately harming victims. Abusive partners can weaponize past substance use during court proceedings; limit access to resources to assist in recovery; or even intentionally create or sustain addiction as a means of power and control. Some survivors use alcohol or drugs as a way to self-medicate in response to trauma. An absence of resources, care, and empathy for these survivors, along with the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, all compound this dire national trend. When programs have funding and staff to support survivors’ needs (including recovery from addiction), it can improve outcomes and break down barriers toward healing.

A Utah advocate shared this story: “On DV Counts Day, a survivor said, without us, she didn’t know where she would be today. Because of our help, she has an apartment, a good job, and sobriety, all because someone believed in her and helped her after all the abuse she had been through.”

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “[Drug Overdose Deaths in the U.S. Top 100,000 Annually](#),” National Center for Health Statistics (2021).

“We received a letter from a survivor stating: ‘My child and I entered this program without really knowing how much we needed a safe, peaceful home. We had been living in a state of fear for so long, and I can never thank you enough. **You gifted us the chance to start a new life.**”

– GEORGIA
ADVOCATE



DEVASTATING UNMET NEEDS



REAL STORIES

“A survivor we work with recently enrolled in school. It had always been her dream but, as a single mom with limited resources, she thought it would never be possible. With our services, she is excelling in her classes and is steadily working toward her degree.”

– Idaho advocate

“Due to recent funding cuts, we have had to cut back on staff, and some smaller shelters in our state will likely have to close their doors. This is truly a disservice to all victims in our state and nationwide.”

– Arkansas advocate

A Lack of Resources Leads to Devastating Unmet Needs

Domestic violence programs are lifelines for survivors in danger. However, many programs struggle to maintain stable funding, diminishing their ability to provide comprehensive services, particularly for high-demand needs like housing, legal representation, and mental health services.

COVID-19 has forced programs to redirect already-limited funding to expenses like PPE, technology improvements, and hotel stays, to protect the health of staff and survivors. Programs need access to emergency funding during disasters as well as regular funding to ensure they are equipped to serve all survivors.

In addition, prior to the passage of the VOCA Fix, VOCA grants had decreased by as much as 70%, resulting in the loss of billions of dollars that supported over 6,000 local organizations and more than six million victims of crime annually.

A Mississippi advocate shared: “We were just notified of drastic cuts to our VOCA funding that will detrimentally affect us and other shelters across the state. The 40% cut we suffered will set our agency’s services back by a decade.”

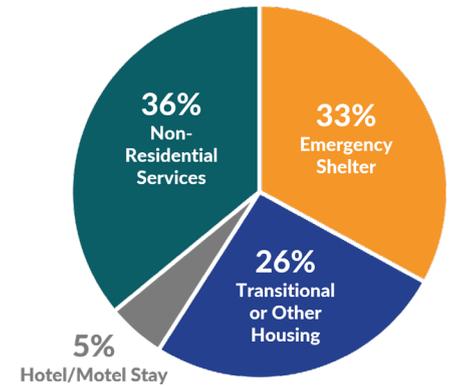


Chart 1: Breakdown of Unmet Requests on 9/9/21

Unmet Requests for Domestic Violence Services

Table 4: Unmet Requests on 9/9/21	Emergency Shelter (33%)	Transitional or Other Housing (26%)	Hotel/Motel Stay (5%)	Non-Residential Services (36%)	Total
Adults	1,982	1,396	274	2,550	6,202
Children	1,184	1,057	156	845	3,242
Total	3,166	2,453	430	3,395	9,444

Unanswered Calls for Help

On September 9, 2021: Tragically, programs did not have the resources to meet 9,444 requests for services.

Safe Housing is Often Out of Reach for Survivors in Need

Housing is a critical resource for survivors escaping abuse, but it is often difficult to obtain. COVID-19 has exacerbated limited access to safe housing, with many programs reducing emergency shelter capacity to ensure that survivors living in group settings could remain as safe and healthy as possible.

On the survey day, 28% of participating programs provided hotel or motel stays for survivors, but this can be extremely costly. Without secure housing available, victims are often faced with the choice of staying with abusive partners or risking homelessness.

A Michigan advocate shared: “It hurts my heart to tell callers that we do not have space available. It’s defeating and invalidating, and it increases the risk that

survivors will return to abusers. We need more funding to assist survivors and provide them with a safe environment to heal from abuse.”

Survivors face numerous barriers to securing permanent housing, which forces them to stay in emergency shelter for longer periods of time. Many domestic violence programs offer transitional housing or other housing options, including short-term rental assistance paired with services, to meet survivors’ diverse housing needs. However, these highly sought-after, effective programs are often at capacity or unavailable. High unemployment and financial insecurity caused by the pandemic have also impacted survivors in shelters, many of whom are unable to obtain permanent housing without employment.

Advocates often scramble to find alternate options for survivors in dire situations when housing programs are at capacity. In Washington, DC, an advocate reported: “We struggled to find housing for a survivor for five months, even after reaching out to our partners. The process was very disappointing, and it was hard for her to feel confident in her decision to leave the abuser.”

Even with housing secured, survivors often need additional, comprehensive services. An advocate in Minnesota shared: “Every survivor could write you a novel on all the reasons they couldn’t ‘just leave.’ Where will they go? How will they afford housing after experiencing financial abuse? How will they support themselves and their children on a single income with no childcare? Many survivors will endure the abuse just to keep their children housed, fed, and clothed.”

Loss of Housing Services

In 2021, due to funding cuts, 85 programs reported reducing or eliminating hotel or motel stays; 51 programs reported reducing or eliminating transitional or other housing services; and 41 programs reported reducing or eliminating emergency shelter services.

Staffing Challenges Lead to Unmet Needs

Most programs operate on limited budgets, with services largely dependent on local, state, territorial,

and federal government grants. Some programs may rely on private donations to help fill funding gaps, which can be highly variable. However, private funding can be unpredictable, particularly during an ongoing economic strain. Funding cuts, and uncertainty about sustainable funding, leave programs vulnerable, leading to layoffs and a reduction in critical services for victims in need. In particular, staffing during the pandemic has presented major challenges, as programs lose staff due to low-paid and high-stress working conditions and increased exposure to the virus. In 2021, nationwide statistics also showed resignations across industries (with a record high of 4.4 million workers quitting jobs in September 2021 alone⁶), causing internal strains for organizations.

An advocate in Rhode Island reported: “VOCA funding cuts have affected staff retention, and we’re not able to introduce additional services for survivors. Staff members are spread thin, and several have already resigned because the stress was too much.”

Lack of Legal Services May Lead to Further Victimization

Through their legal advocacy work, many programs are a source of support for survivors navigating the complex legal system. COVID-19 deeply impacted legal services for programs. Prior courthouse closures, ongoing scheduling delays and backlogs, and, in some instances, fewer hearings and services available, along with technical challenges and lack of access to virtual proceedings, prevented survivors from quickly obtaining legal recourse for custody violations, divorce orders, or child support, creating a backlog that survivors will face for years to come. With virtual hearings taking place, many legal advocates cannot accompany survivors to provide support. Some programs had to cut legal services due to decreased funding, while remaining lawyers faced an increase in caseloads, leaving some survivors without options for representation.

The number of unique visitors to NNEDV’s WomensLaw legal resource project more than doubled between March 2020 and June 2021, due, in part, to high demand for accessible, free, and easy-to-understand legal help. For victims who are

⁶U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021, as cited in NBC, “A Record 4.4 Million People Quit in September as Great Resignation Shows No Signs of Stopping” (2021).

“A survivor called us in a panic, unable to buy food because her abuser had emptied their joint account. Our staff gathered items for her and her children, and she was in tears when we gave them to her. These items symbolized not just food on her table, **but a support system she didn’t even realize she had.**”

- SOUTH CAROLINA
ADVOCATE



already struggling to find safety for themselves and their children, navigating the courts can seem overwhelming, especially amid a pandemic.

A Kansas advocate shared: “We helped a survivor file for a protection from abuse order. We tried to get her an attorney but to no avail—the funding was gone. She was unable to go up against her abuser’s attorney and her protection from abuse order was denied.”

Going to court can be a source of further victimization for survivors, as abusers often manipulate the legal system to extend cases and financially drain survivors. Legal advocates and attorneys at local programs can help ensure survivors do not face the legal system alone.

Table 5: Top Services Reduced or Eliminated in 2021 Due to Funding Cuts	Number of Programs Reducing or Eliminating Services
Hotel/Motel Stay	85
Prevention and/or Educational Programs	63
Childcare/Daycare	60
Transportation	60
Legal Representation by an Attorney	56
Children’s Support or Advocacy	52
Transitional or Other Housing (run by DV program)	51
Therapy/Counseling for Adults (by a licensed practitioner)	49
Therapy/Counseling for Children or Youth (by a licensed practitioner)	47
Court Accompaniment or Legal Advocacy	43

Loss of Legal Services

In 2021, due to funding cuts, 56 programs reported reducing or eliminating legal representation by an attorney, and 43 programs reported reducing or eliminating court accompaniment or legal advocacy.

Lack of Transportation is a Significant Barrier that Impacts Survivors’ Safety

Transportation costs and the inability to easily relocate can be huge barriers to safety for survivors

escaping abuse, especially because some abusers choose to limit their partners’ access to vehicles as a means of further controlling them, or some survivors lack the means or access to purchase or lease their own cars. For survivors in rural areas, limited shelter options and a lack of public transportation make it difficult to seek help. Many abusers choose to isolate their partners from supportive friends and family, and costs for relocation can be prohibitively high for many survivors. Some local programs have limited funding to help with these needs, but demand often far outpaces availability.

Lack of public transportation, or the inability to afford costs associated with private transportation, are also major barriers to finding or maintaining employment, accessing childcare, and getting to and from appointments. While many bus and train systems have returned to regular schedules, survivors on limited incomes still cannot always afford to live near the jobs, schools, and service providers that help them move forward after abuse.

Domestic violence programs need adequate “flexible funding” (low-barrier, direct cash assistance that helps survivors achieve their safety goals) to provide transportation assistance via bus vouchers, gas cards, and other transportation-related resources. Providing this service can be life-changing for a survivor. A Maine advocate shared: “Our rural advocate helped a survivor get to a safe place and provided gift cards for her to purchase gas and other essentials. By addressing these basic needs, we helped her feel much less overwhelmed and able to focus on next steps for herself and her children.”

Loss of Transportation Services

In 2021, due to funding cuts, 60 programs reported reducing or eliminating transportation services.

Limited Resources and Services Further Marginalize Underserved Victims

Domestic violence victims come from all walks of life, but many survivors in marginalized or underserved communities experience higher rates of abuse along with greater systemic barriers to seeking help and accessing resources. Survivors who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color; LGBTQ+ survivors; immigrant survivors; and survivors who are experiencing mental illness or addiction or

✘ From an Illinois advocate: “Centering the experiences and strengths of underserved communities is crucial. In 2021, [at least] 39 transgender and nonbinary people were murdered. Domestic violence, transphobia, racism, and misogyny are prevalent, as Black trans women are particularly vulnerable to violence and death. It is essential to integrate these intersections into prevention work.”

living with disabilities face unique barriers and discrimination, often making access to domestic violence services difficult. COVID-19 has also had a disproportionate impact on marginalized communities, with many suffering increased negative health and financial outcomes compared to the general population.⁷

Meeting the unique needs of survivors from these communities requires culturally competent and accessible services and programs. Federal policy reforms that address systemic discrimination and other barriers are essential to mitigate the challenges faced by these survivors.

Due to discrimination and racism, many survivors from marginalized communities do not feel comfortable relying on the criminal justice system when seeking justice and safety. For example, some undocumented immigrant survivors must make the difficult decision between enduring the abuse or risking deportation. Black survivors and survivors of color may hesitate to access services out of fear of law enforcement and state violence.

Long-standing racial discrimination in housing has compounded the needs of survivors of color. Programs must understand and respond to all survivors’ unique and intersecting needs, especially those who face systemic barriers. These unique concerns must also be factored into the solutions with an understanding that not all survivors want the involvement of legal system or would approach it in the same way.

An advocate from Wisconsin shared: “We supported a transgender survivor of color who had experienced homelessness and mental health challenges as a result of abuse. We provided housing and used federal funding to contract with a therapist who had experience supporting survivors and the trans community. Today, the survivor is self-sufficient and safe, thanks to the funds as well as her own resilience and power.”

An advocate from Connecticut shared: “Victims of color may not be able to use the police as a resource, due to over-policing in their communities, harsher sentencing, and other issues stemming from the history of racism in this country. It should be a national priority to hear and address the barriers to safety and access that survivors of color are more likely to face.”

Table 6: Services Provided by Local Programs	% of Programs Providing on 9/9/21	% of Programs Offering throughout the Year
Bilingual Advocacy	36%	65%
Support/Advocacy Related to Substance Abuse	26%	74%
Support/Advocacy to Elder Victims of Abuse	25%	79%
Support/Advocacy for LGBTQ+ Victims of Abuse	23%	86%
Support/Advocacy Related to Immigration	22%	75%
Support/Advocacy Related to Disability Issues	18%	67%

Survivors in the LGBTQ+ community also experience discrimination that may stop them from reaching out for help. Transgender survivors, for example, may have concerns about unwelcoming staff at domestic violence programs or limited sensitivity to the barriers they face. Many victim services organizations, law enforcement, and the legal system do not fully understand the dynamics of domestic violence within the LGBTQ+ community, leading to further victimization.

Survivors who have a disability or have a dependent with a disability, as well as survivors who are elderly, may encounter difficulties finding programs that offer accessible housing and other services—

⁷ Abedi, Vida, et al. “Racial, Economic, and Health Inequality and COVID-19 Infection in the United States,” *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* (2020).

particularly as these survivors face additional health risks due to new concerns caused by the pandemic when attempting to access them. Survivors in these communities may rely on abusive partners for care or financial support, making it harder to leave and establish financial stability.

Lack of Affordable Childcare is a Barrier to Safety

Access to safe and affordable childcare is vital for survivors with children. Without affordable childcare, it is difficult to secure or keep employment, complete an education, or meet with service providers. COVID-19 has made childcare more unpredictable and inaccessible, with limited options available and rising prices due to an increase in demand. For those who can afford in-home care, these options may have also been reduced during COVID because of an inability to

safely bring non-family members into the home. Some domestic violence programs have also stopped providing childcare services. Without stable funding, domestic violence programs may not have the resources to provide survivors with childcare assistance.

An advocate in Louisiana shared: “We have been helping a survivor who did everything she could to regain custody of her children. However, she is now at the point where she believes she may have to return to her abuser because she cannot find childcare for them.”

Loss of Childcare Services

In 2021, due to funding cuts, 60 programs reported reducing or eliminating childcare services.

REAL STORIES

“A survivor had been told by her abuser that she couldn’t make it on her own. We connected her with healthcare, childcare, and housing. She said, with our help, she knows she can make it on her own. Having a safe place for herself and her children is no longer a dream, but a reality.” – **Tennessee advocate**

“One survivor told us that she finally feels like she has control over her life for the first time in more than a decade. She can have pets, a garden, and a peaceful retirement. She shared: ‘I no longer worry about having a place to live that will be safe and secure. Maybe I’ll even travel—because I have a home to come back to.’” – **Wyoming advocate**

“Shelter has the opportunity for many amazing, positive impacts beyond safety from an abuser. On DV Counts Day, we organized a birthday party for a survivor in our shelter. It was the first birthday party she had ever had in her whole life.” – **Montana advocate**

“A survivor was able to connect with our culturally specific advocate, since they both speak the same native language. This is one of the most exciting calls we receive—in that moment, you can just feel the weight that has been lifted and the amount of power the survivor takes back.” – **New Hampshire advocate**

“On DV Counts Day, a survivor moved out of our shelter and into a new place with her daughter. She has experienced homelessness and incarceration, and she worked very hard to overcome barriers to finding housing. She was so proud of herself, and I can’t convey the look of joy, pride, and accomplishment on her face. We are so happy for her.” – **South Dakota advocate**

“One survivor just completed her final support group session and told us: ‘I have learned so much. I learned how trauma affects me, and I learned positive coping skills to help me. I have learned that the abuse was not my fault, and that I am enough.’” – **Oklahoma advocate**

“It is always heartbreaking to turn away a victim with a pet. We all know the link between domestic violence and animal abuse, and **it's time for us to have the resources we need to make our shelters pet-friendly.** We can't be the barrier that is keeping victims in harm's way.”

– MISSOURI
ADVOCATE



No Victim Should Be Left Behind: Ending Abuse Requires Federal Investments

On September 9, 2021, advocates provided survivors with resources, support, and hope—just as they do every single day. Despite the challenges of 2021, domestic violence program staff continued their lifesaving efforts. Local programs help make our communities safer and move us closer to a future where everyone can live safely and without fear.

We cannot, however, create this future without sufficient funding for programs and advocates. Each year, thousands of survivors and their children are turned away from programs and services that could save their lives, because the funding simply isn't there. Programs need adequate funding and resources so advocates never have to turn away a victim in need. Our nation continues to be in the midst of multiple, intersecting crises that exacerbate disparities and endanger domestic violence survivors. The goal of this report is to shine a light on both the long-standing and evolving needs in the field and connect those needs with the solutions that could help.

Since our previous report, Congress and the Administration have taken several important steps to help survivors, including: reauthorizing VAWA, which includes groundbreaking provisions to strengthen and modernize the law, toward the goal of ensuring all victims are served and supported; passing the American Rescue Plan, which included new and robust support for survivors, domestic and sexual violence programs, and culturally specific programs; passing the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021, which stabilized victim services funding; continuing progress on FVPSA reauthorization; and announcing the creation of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

However, more must be done. To make additional, meaningful strides in reducing gender-based violence during this challenging time, we urge Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration to invest in strategies to prevent violence and advance access to safety, justice, and economic stability for survivors while reducing reliance on systems that are not helping all survivors.

We must center the needs of historically marginalized survivors by supporting funding and policies to reduce barriers to safety and justice for survivors who face ongoing oppression and discrimination. We call on Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration to take action by:

- ★ **Launching and implementing the Administration's National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, to ensure a comprehensive, coordinated, whole-of-government approach** to prevent and address gender-based violence, including improving agency-wide responses and inter- and intra-agency coordination, and establishing high-level positions and programs within key agencies.
- ★ **Increasing essential funding for domestic and sexual violence programs in Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations**, with a particular focus on shelter, housing, services, legal assistance, culturally specific programs, and funding for tribes and tribal programs. Specifically, Congress should provide substantially increased investments in VOCA, FVPSA, and the DV/SA set-aside at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. With increased core funding, programs can invest in specialized services like mental health and substance abuse. Additionally, Congress must invest in a comprehensive prevention strategy through the DELTA program that reaches each state, territory, and tribe and ensures that organizations led by and for Communities of Color have fair access to federal resources.
- ★ **Centering the needs of survivors from Communities of Color in all legislation, appropriations, and policymaking**; supporting funding and policies that reduce barriers to safety and justice for



survivors who face past or ongoing oppression and systemic discrimination; and examining systems that disproportionately harm Communities of Color, including the criminal justice system.

- ★ **Reauthorizing and improving the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)** by bolstering existing funding for programs; increasing funding for culturally specific programs serving Communities of Color; and scaling up prevention strategies to reach every community.
- ★ **Enacting workplace protections that promote financial security**, including paid safe and sick leave, paid family medical leave, pay equity, living wage requirements, union rights, and harassment, pregnancy discrimination, and LGBTQ+ workplace protections. We urge Congress to address these issues through passage of the Healthy Families Act, the FAMILY Act, the Paycheck Fairness Act, the Raise the Wage Act, the PRO Act, the BE HEARD in the Workplace Act, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and the Equality Act, among other pieces of important legislation. The substantive protections in these bills should also be considered as part of other legislation where needed to better support survivors.
- ★ **Enacting policies that promote economic justice for survivors**, including federalizing eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits, providing low-barrier direct cash assistance, improving access to Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit, and increasing survivors' access to housing, childcare, transportation, legal assistance, and other comprehensive services tailored to their needs.
- ★ **Advancing access to safe, affordable housing for survivors** through enhanced legal protections and bolstered access to a full spectrum of housing options including flexible funding, vouchers, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, temporary housing and emergency shelter. Congress must expand upon and support robust VAWA housing protections, the HEALS Act, and legislation that protects tenants from unfair eviction screening policies that disproportionately affect Women of Color, such as previous evictions, credit history, and criminal background checks.
- ★ **Strengthening survivor-based immigration protections** through legislation and appropriations, by increasing access to U visas; safeguarding abused dependent spouses and children; supporting survivor self-sufficiency and removing vulnerabilities to further victimization; and preventing detention and removal of victims.
- ★ **Expanding and implementing relief funds and policies** to allow communities to address local programs to meet the immediate and longer-term needs of survivors and increase access to housing, health, and economic resources for all survivors. This must include robust economic justice and other protections in the Build Back Better Act and any future COVID-19 relief legislation.

You can contact your members of Congress and urge them to support these and other necessary resources for programs and survivors.

Visit [NNEDV.org/TAkeAction](https://www.nnedv.org/TAkeAction) to learn more.

If a friend or family member tells you about abuse they have experienced—or are experiencing—listen without judgment. Tell them you are there for them, no matter what. Encourage them to seek services if it is safe for them to do so. You can find a list of resources at [NNEDV.org/GetHelp](https://www.nnedv.org/GetHelp).



SERVICES PROVIDED

Services	Provided on 9/9/21	Offered throughout the Year	Reduced or Eliminated Due to Funding Cuts	Reduced or Eliminated Due to COVID-19
Emergency Shelter	71%	82%	3%	20%
Children's Support or Advocacy	53%	79%	3%	7%
Court Accompaniment or Legal Advocacy	52%	88%	3%	12%
Support/Advocacy Related to Housing/Landlord	51%	88%	2%	3%
Transportation	47%	85%	4%	15%
Support/Advocacy Related to Mental Health	45%	85%	2%	4%
Support/Advocacy Related to Public Benefits/TANF/Welfare	42%	85%	1%	3%
Transitional or Other Housing (run by DV program)	42%	50%	3%	2%
Bilingual Advocacy	36%	65%	1%	2%
Prevention and/or Educational Programs	34%	80%	4%	13%
Therapy/Counseling for Adults (by a licensed practitioner)	32%	54%	3%	4%
Support/Advocacy Related to Child Welfare/Protective Services	30%	80%	1%	3%
Hotel/Motel Stay	28%	72%	6%	4%
Support/Advocacy Related to Health Care or Health Care Systems	26%	73%	1%	4%
Support/Advocacy Related to Substance Abuse	26%	74%	1%	3%
Support/Advocacy Related to Elder Victims of Abuse	25%	79%	1%	3%
Support/Advocacy for LGBTQ+ Victims of Abuse	23%	86%	1%	2%
Support/Advocacy to Teen/Young Adult Victims of Dating Abuse	23%	82%	2%	6%
Support/Advocacy Related to Immigration	22%	75%	1%	3%
Financial Literacy/Budgeting	20%	68%	2%	3%
Therapy/Counseling for Children or Youth (by a licensed practitioner)	19%	43%	3%	4%
Support/Advocacy Related to Disability Issues	18%	67%	1%	2%
Support/Advocacy Related to Technology Use (cyberstalking, etc.)	18%	78%	1%	2%
Support/Advocacy to Victims of Trafficking	18%	76%	1%	2%
Job Training/Employment Assistance	16%	51%	1%	3%
Childcare/Daycare	15%	37%	4%	8%
Legal Representation by an Attorney	15%	31%	4%	3%
3 rd Party Translation/Interpretation Services	14%	66%	1%	2%
Support/Advocacy for Active Duty or Veteran Victims in U.S. Armed Forces	7%	57%	1%	1%
Safe Exchange/Visitation	6%	22%	2%	3%
Alternatives to the Criminal Justice System (transformative, restorative justice)	4%	20%	1%	1%
HIV/AIDS Information and/or Support	4%	35%	1%	1%
Matched Savings Programs and/or Microloans	2%	10%	2%	1%
Onsite Medical Services	2%	9%	1%	1%

SUMMARY DATA

State or Territory	Response Rate ^a	Adults Served	Children Served	Total People Served	Unmet Requests for Services	Hotline Contacts Received	People Engaged in Training	People Served in Shelter	People Served in Transitional or Other Housing	People Served in Hotels or Motels	Non-Residential People Served
AK	100%	319	212	531	22	129	35	260	145	17	109
AL	88%	407	230	637	18	156	253	165	172	8	292
AR	75%	185	127	312	56	162	50	168	48	2	94
AZ	55%	561	300	861	50	149	337	353	148	40	320
CA	73%	2,789	1,744	4,533	1,071	1,351	2,001	871	1,408	166	2,088
CO	71%	636	314	950	245	371	122	211	233	43	463
CT	100%	993	497	1,490	54	164	243	210	267	36	977
DC	95%	383	388	771	32	175	253	242	292	6	231
DE	75%	141	100	241	8	25	2	47	32	11	151
FL	63%	1,010	575	1,585	31	371	247	764	297	49	475
GA	78%	1,000	910	1,910	407	578	429	520	656	139	595
GU	25%	11	28	39	0	5	0	26	12	1	0
HI	86%	543	407	950	67	81	66	64	200	0	686
IA	100%	673	424	1,097	271	416	281	163	460	40	434
ID	68%	217	153	370	87	171	66	76	130	36	128
IL	93%	2,107	1,084	3,191	623	851	361	434	979	248	1,530
IN	100%	2,085	780	2,865	418	588	770	516	498	26	1,825
KS	100%	516	245	761	32	251	310	196	114	25	426
KY	100%	627	358	985	73	129	38	293	298	63	331
LA	100%	317	294	611	45	152	1,114	108	240	1	262
MA	98%	1,630	672	2,302	322	508	639	406	411	109	1,376
MD	95%	528	234	762	191	302	52	223	98	45	396
ME	100%	452	156	608	54	141	23	111	149	25	323
MI	89%	1,735	1,089	2,824	218	512	196	704	831	55	1,234
MN	72%	1,516	905	2,421	328	859	596	458	252	69	1,642
MO	86%	1,195	654	1,849	378	392	66	545	531	77	696
MP	100%	25	34	59	0	1	0	18	41	0	0
MS	100%	266	144	410	56	102	42	122	80	2	206
MT	35%	111	86	197	4	31	0	68	79	19	31
NC	71%	1,054	490	1,544	178	464	256	444	256	88	756

State or Territory	Response Rate ^a	Adults Served	Children Served	Total People Served	Unmet Requests for Services	Hotline Contacts Received	People Engaged in Training	People Served in Shelter	People Served in Transitional or Other Housing	People Served in Hotels or Motels	Non-Residential People Served
ND	90%	231	71	302	22	58	112	60	31	6	205
NE	90%	356	175	531	35	171	194	113	103	18	297
NH	100%	209	91	300	42	110	209	51	91	9	149
NJ	84%	1,045	596	1,641	53	622	194	233	271	315	822
NM	48%	244	272	516	41	87	12	113	265	20	118
NV	88%	228	141	369	59	304	40	77	137	1	154
NY	92%	4,152	2,494	6,646	766	1,584	661	2,132	2,002	44	2,468
OH	100%	1,480	976	2,456	286	770	1,266	903	576	69	908
OK	48%	417	169	586	82	121	168	234	60	0	292
OR	64%	766	334	1,100	127	475	46	178	355	89	478
PA	83%	1,475	739	2,214	152	625	1188	511	672	103	928
PR	47%	261	114	375	48	22	157	74	124	0	177
RI	80%	389	104	493	61	154	2	56	97	32	308
SC	100%	261	217	478	21	112	5	81	162	90	145
SD	55%	175	103	278	1	74	105	127	8	2	141
TN	89%	947	340	1,287	173	391	259	383	243	24	637
TX	88%	3,570	2,543	6,113	1,122	1,562	1,921	1,588	2,203	118	2,204
UT	100%	501	415	916	217	324	117	308	263	36	309
VA	69%	858	401	1,259	36	392	113	405	170	117	567
VI	100%	29	32	61	40	16	12	16	8	1	36
VT	77%	107	44	151	15	85	41	37	35	16	63
WA	64%	1,119	879	1,998	373	449	91	416	788	60	734
WI	69%	1,040	566	1,606	293	605	399	488	151	46	921
WV	100%	314	112	426	21	128	30	121	124	16	165
WY	100%	142	122	264	19	120	44	67	70	6	121

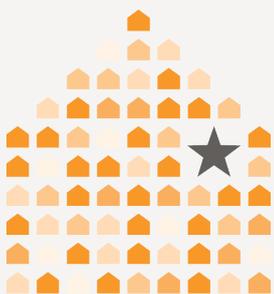
TOTAL	80%	44,348	25,684	70,032	9,444	18,948	16,234	17,558	18,366	2,684	31,424
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^aThe response rate refers to the percentage of identified primary purpose local domestic violence programs in the state or territory that participated in the 2021 Domestic Violence Counts survey.



“Domestic violence program staff work with survivors during some of the most dangerous, emotional, and confusing times in their lives. They routinely go above and beyond, professionally and without hesitation. They deserve far more compensation, recognition, and appreciation than they receive.”

- TEXAS ADVOCATE



NNEDV
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