Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Assistance Program

The Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Assistance Program (Rural Program) recognizes that victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and child sexual abuse who live in rural communities face unique challenges and barriers to receiving assistance rarely encountered in urban areas, including:

- Geographic isolation;
- Poor economic structure;
- Strong social and cultural pressures;
- Lack of available services in rural jurisdictions; and
- Lack of anonymity and security when seeking shelter services.

These challenges significantly compound problems facing those seeking support to end violence in their lives. They also complicate the criminal justice system’s ability to investigate and prosecute cases, and create difficulties for victim service providers to identify and assist victims.

127 Grantees Reporting
Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2015, 127 unique grantees reported activities funded by the Rural Program.

15,091 Victims Served
On average, grantees served 15,091 victims during each 6-month reporting period.

2,707 Calls for Assistance
Grantees fielded a total of 2,707 calls to law enforcement for assistance.

Rural victims of domestic/sexual violence who seek to become and remain safe from violence face geographic challenges in reaching service providers. They may need to travel great distances, and there may be limited public transportation services in their communities. In one study, over 25% of women in small rural and isolated areas lived more than 40 miles from the closest service provider, compared to less than 1% of women in urban settings.
The Rural Program enhances the safety of victims and their children by supporting projects uniquely designed to identify, address, respond to, and prevent these crimes in rural America. Purpose areas include:

- Implement, expand, and establish collaborative initiatives among law enforcement officers; prosecutors; victim advocates; healthcare providers, including sexual assault forensic examiners; and related parties to investigate and prosecute these crimes;
- Provide treatment, counseling, advocacy, and other assistance to adult and minor victims; and
- Work cooperatively with rural communities to develop education and prevention strategies that address their unique social, economic, and geographic conditions.

In addition to these purpose areas, as of VAWA 2013, Rural grantees must implement one or more of the following strategies:

- Develop multidisciplinary teams focusing on high risk cases with the goal of preventing domestic and dating violence homicides;
- Increase treatment, counseling, advocacy, and legal assistance;
- Develop education and prevention strategies;
- Develop, enlarge, or strengthen programs addressing sexual assault; and
- Focus on the needs of victims residing in remote rural and geographically isolated areas.

In addition, VAWA 2013 clarified that victim services and legal assistance include services and assistance to victims of domestic/sexual violence who are also victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons.
These changes were implemented in FY 2014, meaning that grants made on or after October 1, 2014 could specifically address them. If an activity falling under one of the added areas could not be captured in sections of the existing form that grantees use to report, they could describe their accomplishments in narrative sections of the form.

General Grant Information

Information for this report was submitted by 127 individual grantees for the July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2015 progress reporting period.

- 30 (24%) grantees reported that their grants specifically addressed tribal populations.
- Grantees most frequently addressed the following purpose area:
  - Provided treatment, counseling, advocacy, and other assistance to adult and minor victims.

Staff

Grant-funded staff provide victim services, training, outreach, law enforcement, prosecution, and probation, among other services, to increase victim safety and offender accountability. Being able to hire staff is critical to the overall function and success of programs.

- 124 (98%) grantees used funds for staffing needs.
- Grantees funded an average of 383 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff during each 6-month period.
- Grantees most often used these staffing funds to support victim advocates and program coordinators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Staff supported with Rural grant funds, July 2013–June 2015: Selected groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff funded</td>
<td>6-month average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total FTE staff funded</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim advocates</td>
<td>135 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program coordinators</td>
<td>66 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainers</td>
<td>40 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>24 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support staff</td>
<td>22 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors</td>
<td>19 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach workers</td>
<td>17 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Data presented for the most frequently reported categories only (≥5%).
Grantee Perspective

Rural Grant funding allowed us to bring in national trainers to reach a group of over 100 from around our service area and beyond, which made a tremendous impact. Over half of the law enforcement officers from our service area attended the training, and as a result of the training, the Lewis and Clark County Attorney’s office is working with an expert witness for adult sexual assault cases, which it has not traditionally done.

Friendship Center of Helena, Montana

Training

Grantees train victim advocates, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, court personnel, probation officers, child protection staff, and mental health and other professionals how to develop an effective coordinated community response to violence. **This training improves professional response to victims and increases offender accountability.**

- **106** (83%) grantees used funds for training.
- Grantees convened a total of **3,552** training events.
- Grantees trained a total of **45,982** people.
- Most often these trainings reached law enforcement officers (13%), victim advocates (12%), educators (11%), and health professionals (8%).

Community Education

Grant-funded staff provide general information to the community to increase awareness of the five crimes. **Community education can be used as a tool to connect people who have a common goal of building safe, supportive, and accountable communities.**

- **108** (85%) grantees used funds for community education.
- Grantees hosted a total of **13,360** education events.
- Grantees educated a total of **379,477** people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People educated with Rural grant funds, July 2013–June 2015: Selected groups</th>
<th>2-year total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total community members educated</td>
<td><strong>379,477</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle and high school students</td>
<td>146,902 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members</td>
<td>100,132 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University or college students</td>
<td>35,190 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school students</td>
<td>34,807 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents or guardians</td>
<td>17,314 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Data presented for the most frequently reported categories only (≥5%).

1 Community education involves providing general information that will increase public awareness of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and/or child sexual abuse. Community education is not the same as training. Training involves providing information on sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or child sexual abuse that enables a professional to improve his or her response to victims as it relates to their role in the system.
Victim Services

Grantees provide an array of services to victims. All victims receive safety planning, referrals, and information as needed. These comprehensive support services address a wide variety of needs to help victims become and remain safe from violence.

- 111 (87%) grantees used funds for victim services.
- Grantees provided services to an average of 15,091 victims during each 6-month period.
- 99% of victims who sought services received them during each 6-month period.

During each 6-month period, on average, grantees provided:

- Victim advocacy services to 9,098 victims;
- Crisis intervention services to 8,808 victims;
- Support group/counseling services to 4,368 victims;
- Civil legal advocacy services to 3,429 victims;
- Criminal justice advocacy services to 2,418 victims;
- Transportation services to 1,475 victims; and
- Child advocacy services to 1,129 victims.

Other Services:

- Victim-witness notification/victim outreach services were used a total of 17,566 times;
- Grantees received a total of 152,801 hotline calls.
  - The majority of these calls (55%) came from victims.

Grantees provide emergency shelter or transitional housing to victims and their family members. Emergency shelter can include nights in safe houses or hotel/motel accommodations.

**Table 3**  Victims sheltered with Rural grant funds, July 2013–June 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelter services</th>
<th>Victims (6-month average)</th>
<th>Family members (6-month average)</th>
<th>Bed nights (2-year total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency shelter</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>148,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional housing</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>36,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,339</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>184,777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victims Seeking Services

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence and child sexual abuse. Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2015:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victims of domestic/dating violence (81%).
WV - Grantee Perspective

Rural grant funds have established full-time advocacy for victims in seven areas of West Virginia that previously had no sexual assault services available. Services offered as a direct result of this program have provided thousands of victims with support and resources that would otherwise not be available. Rural grant funds were the catalyst for the development of eight Sexual Assault Response Teams, which collaborate on issues and cases involving victims of sexual assault, stalking and dating violence. This networking ensures that a core of first responders is working together to provide victim-focused and comprehensive services to victims and reduces increased trauma to the victim.

WEST VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR RAPE INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Victims’ Relationship to Offender

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence and child sexual abuse. Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2015:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victimized by a *spouse or intimate partner* (68%).
- The remaining victims were most commonly victimized in the context of a *dating relationship* (13%) or by another *family or household member* (10%).

**Figure 2** Type of victimization by relationship to offender: Domestic/dating violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to Offender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating relationship</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4** Victims seeking services with Rural grant funds, July 2013–June 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victims seeking services</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>6-month average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total victims seeking services</td>
<td>15,271</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims served</td>
<td>14,829</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims partially served</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims not served</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** "Partially Served" represents victims who received some but not all of the service(s) they requested, provided those services were funded under the Rural Program grant. "Not served" represents victims who sought services and did not receive the service(s) they were seeking, provided those services were funded under the Rural Program grant.
**Figure 3**  Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Sexual assault**

- Spouse: 40%
- Acquaintance: 22%
- Family member: 20%
- Dating relationship: 13%
- Stranger: 6%

**Figure 4**  Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Child sexual abuse**

- Family member: 67%
- Acquaintance: 24%
- Spouse: 4%
- Dating relationship: 3%
- Stranger: 2%

**Figure 5**  Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Stalking**

- Spouse: 46%
- Acquaintance: 22%
- Dating Relationship: 18%
- Family Member: 11%
- Stranger: 3%
Reasons Victims Were Not Served or Were Partially Served

During each reporting period, grantees most frequently noted the following barriers as reasons why victims were not served or were only partially served:

- Program reached capacity;
- Program unable to provide service due to limited resources/priority setting;
- Victim did not meet statutory requirements;
- Conflict of interest; or
- Program rules not acceptable to victim.

Demographics of Victims Served and Partially Served

Grantees served or partially served an average of 15,091 victims during each 6-month period. The majority of those victims were white (66%), female (90%), and between the ages of 25 and 59 (66%).
Secondary Victims

Secondary victims are individuals who are indirectly affected by domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking, including children, siblings, spouses or intimate partners, parents, grandparents, other relatives, friends, and neighbors.

- Grantees provided services to an average of 6,558 secondary victims during each 6-month period.

KS • Grantee Perspective

Often survivors are physically isolated by geographic location to services but live in small work and social communities where personal information is accessible to the general public. For example, in Jackson County the local newspaper publishes the names of all individuals applying for protection orders. Survivors often face immediate intimidation by third parties with this information so accessible. Despite attempts by law enforcement and advocacy agencies, the paper refuses to stop this practice. This is common practice in the media in rural areas. Survivors often are forced to deal with limited support but significant public and social implications when seeking recourse to stop the violence in their lives.

YWCA CENTER FOR SAFETY AND EMPOWERMENT, KANSAS

Figure 8 | Demographics of victims served and partially served: Age (6-month average)

- 25–59: 66%
- 18–24: 16%
- 13–17: 7%
- 60+: 4%
- 7–12: 4%
- 0–6: 3%

Figure 9 | Demographics of victims served and partially served: Other (6-month average)

- People with disabilities: 9%
- People with limited English proficiency: 8%
- People who are immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers: 6%

Figure 10 | Provision of services to secondary victims by Rural Program grantees, by type of presenting victimization

Secondary victims served by type of victimization (6-month average)

- Domestic/dating violence: 82%
- Sexual assault: 4%
- Stalking: 15%
Criminal Justice

The Rural Program promotes a coordinated community response that includes representatives from victim service agencies, child welfare agencies, law enforcement, prosecution, courts, probation, healthcare providers, and public and private community resources.

Law Enforcement

Grantees address the role of law enforcement in responding to domestic/sexual violence.

- **18** (14%) grantees used funds for law enforcement activities.
- Law enforcement staff made a total of **2,806** victim referrals to governmental and non-governmental victim services across the 2-year period.

A proactive response and victim-centered attitude influences whether or not victims report these offenses, and whether appropriate evidence is collected to allow prosecutors to convict offenders.

A meaningful and serious response by law enforcement agencies includes:

- Documenting all calls for services;
- Actively investigating all sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking incidents;
- Referring cases to prosecutors (as appropriate);
- Seeking warrants and statements of charges (as appropriate);
- Arresting the perpetrator;
- Helping victims secure protection orders;
- Accompanying the victim to the home to retrieve their immediate belongings (as appropriate);
- Making referrals (as appropriate); and
- Providing victims with information about available services.

Without proper training, an officer may not be able to identify the predominant aggressor, may unknowingly minimize a victim’s trauma, may fail to collect all relevant evidence, and may mistakenly arrest the victim. Moreover, if an officer sides with an abuser, a victim may not report future assaults. Research shows that law enforcement were most likely to arrest perpetrators when they received training on and followed these best practices: in–person investigating, following up with victims after initial contact, conducting safety planning with victims, assessing the needs of children exposed to the violence, providing victims with 911 telephones, describing protection orders and court procedures, connecting victims with available shelter and services, explaining the effects of domestic violence on children, and helping victims feel safe.25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Law enforcement activities</th>
<th>Sexual assault</th>
<th>Domestic/dating violence</th>
<th>Stalking</th>
<th>Child sexual abuse</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calls for assistance</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>2,194</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>2,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incident reports</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>3,306</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>4,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases investigated</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>3,271</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>4,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals to prosecutor</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>1,134</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>1,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrests of predominant aggressor</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>1,195</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>1,550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5** Law enforcement activities in Rural Program criminal cases, July 2013–June 2015

**NOTE:** Grantees report only on law enforcement activities that are funded under the Rural Program and they may receive funds for one or for a number of these activities. Therefore, no relationships can be inferred or comparisons made between activities reported here.
Remaining Areas of Need

Grantees reported ongoing issues of poverty and the lack of basic services in rural areas as the biggest challenges to serving victims.

Grantees report difficulty in helping victims meet their basic needs, such as:
- Affordable housing and shelter services;
- Child care;
- Employment;
- Access to credit;
- Food security;
- Healthcare, including mental health and substance abuse counseling;
- Legal services; and
- Relocation expenses.

Rural grantees reported significant gaps in available services, especially for underserved populations, including:
- American Indians/Alaska Natives;
- Immigrants;
- LGBT populations;
- Elderly adults; and
- Persons with disabilities.

Grantees working with these populations lack the resources and the coordinated community response required to:
- Provide linguistically and culturally specific services; and
- Help increase the safety of victims.

Grantees reported ongoing needs for new and expanded community education campaigns, such as:
- Cyberstalking/bullying;
- Teen dating violence; and
- Sexual assault.

Grantees also stressed the need to expand education and training to law enforcement, including police, prosecutors and judges.

Overall, isolation and lack of access to public or private transportation and the lack of confidentiality in rural areas hinder victims’ efforts to establish safety and self-sufficiency, as well as service providers’ efforts in supporting them to do so.

OR - Grantee Perspective

The rural location and static economy continue to be barriers to those who could benefit from services. Many victims are not employed outside the home, are undereducated, and are completely dependent on their abuser for basic needs such as food and shelter. The lack of jobs, particularly family wage jobs, in our area can be an insurmountable barrier for many victims. They would rather stay in their situation than face an uncertain future with no job or means of feeding and clothing their children.

UNION COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE, OREGON

KS - Grantee Perspective

There is a lack of bilingual staff in sexual assault and domestic violence programs, and in particular rural programs. Current bilingual SA/DV advocates are frequently over-burdened because of the significant need, and victims typically rely on bilingual staff for all of their service needs, referrals, and assistance. This often leaves bilingual advocates in the position of acting as an interpreter rather than in the advocacy role when working with other allied professionals and systems.

KANSAS COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

VT - Grantee Perspective

Victims frequently express that they do not feel supported by law enforcement or legal agencies and they don’t feel enough is being done from a community response perspective to support their safety and/or validate their abuse. Because of this and because of the insulating nature of being in a rural area with deeply ingrained cultural beliefs of what constitutes abuse, generational poverty, and high rates of addiction, victims are often reluctant to come forward to seek services.

VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES, VERMONT

KS - Grantee Perspective

Often victims are physically isolated by geographic location to services, but live in small work and social communities where personal information is accessible to the general public. For example, in Jackson County the local newspaper publishes the names of all individuals applying for protection orders. Victims often face immediate intimidation by third parties with this information so accessible. Despite attempts by law enforcement and advocacy agencies, the paper refuses to stop this practice. This is common practice in the media in rural areas. Victims often are forced to deal with limited support but significant public and social implications when seeking recourse to stop the violence in their lives.

YWCA CENTER FOR SAFETY AND EMPOWERMENT, KANSAS