

# Sexual Assault Services Program—Grants to Culturally Specific Programs

The Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP) was created by VAWA 2005, and is the first federal funding stream dedicated solely to direct intervention and related assistance for victims of sexual assault. SASP encompasses four different funding streams for states and territories: tribes; tribal organizations and nonprofit tribal organizations; state, territorial, and tribal sexual assault coalitions; and culturally specific organizations.

**THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES CULTURALLY Specific Grant Program (SASP-CS)** is to establish, maintain, and expand sustainable sexual assault services provided by culturally specific organizations. Grantees are nonprofit organizations that focus primarily on culturally specific communities and have experience in the area of sexual assault, or who partner with an organization having such expertise. They provide intervention, advocacy, accompaniment (e.g. accompanying victims to court, medical facilities, and police departments), support services, and related assistance for adult, youth, and child victims of sexual assault; non-offending family and household members of victims; and those collaterally affected by sexual assault.

## 38 Grantees Reporting

Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2017, 38 unique grantees reported activities funded by the SASP-CS Program.

## 1,095 Victims Served

On average, grantees served 1,095 victims during each 6-month reporting period.

## 380 Secondary Victims Served

On average, grantees served 380 secondary victims during each 6-month reporting period.

*In a national survey, providers (at legal services, social services, and domestic violence and sexual assault programs) who serve immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking related that, when victims called law enforcement, responding officers were able to identify the language spoken by victims in fewer than half of the cases and, in 30% of those cases, unqualified interpreters were used. They further reported that clients experienced bias when courts and law enforcement relied on inappropriate or unqualified interpreters who may intentionally or unintentionally misrepresent the victim's statements (Lee et al., 2013).*



### CA • Grantee Perspective

SASP Culturally Specific Program funding has provided Asian Health Services with stability to provide culturally specific services and programming for Southeast Asian young women impacted by sexual assault and sexual exploitation. Applying for grants to serve such a specific population and specific issue area continues to be a struggle for Banteay Srei, as many foundations and funders are seeking to fund organizations that serve a broader base.

ASIAN HEALTH SERVICES, CALIFORNIA



### GA • Grantee Perspective

This grant is allowing us to provide specialized services to sexual assault survivors of all ages that we could not have done before and has built our capacity as an agency. The funds have significantly impacted our partner agency, Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network's (GAIN) ability to refer our clients to culturally specific interpreters, therapists, and social services. The funding has strengthened our partnership to ensure holistic, wraparound services are available for both of our agencies' clients that are sensitive to specific cultural perspectives and experiences.

RAKSHA, INC., GEORGIA



### CA • Grantee Perspective

SASP Culturally Specific Program funding allows Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF) to create healing groups and continue engaging the community with a grassroots approach. The healing groups have been an effective means for CPAF to move away from the traditional Western talk-therapy model and toward a more culturally relevant avenue of healing for API SA survivors. Healing groups also encourage community accountability, which CPAF continues to learn how to develop and grow within API communities.

CENTER FOR THE PACIFIC ASIAN FAMILY, CALIFORNIA

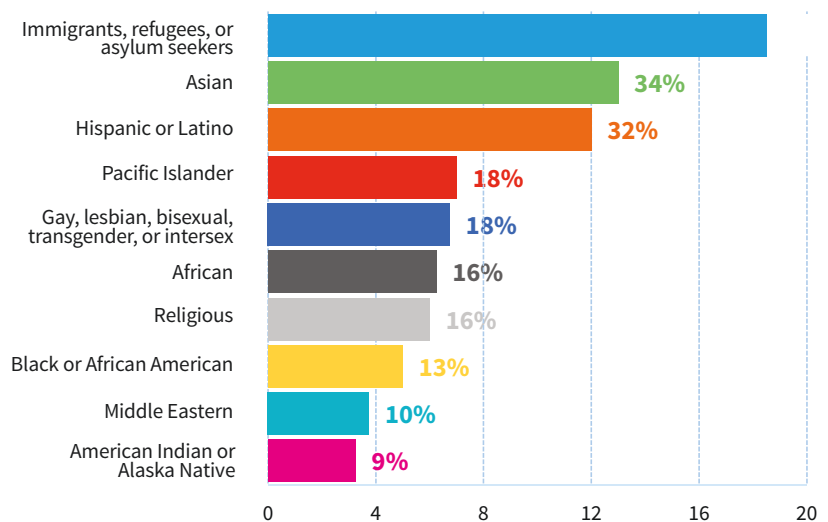
VAWA 2013 clarified that victim services and legal assistance include services and assistance to **victims of domestic/sexual violence who are also victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons**. VAWA 2013 also modified the focus of SASP-CS by redefining “culturally specific” to mean primarily directed toward racial and ethnic minority groups as defined in section 1707(g) of the Public Health Service Act (“American Indians [including Alaska Natives, Eskimos, and Aleuts]; Asian Americans; Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders; Blacks; and Hispanics”).

## General Grant Information

Information for this report was submitted by **38** individual grantees for the July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2017 progress reporting period.

- **2** (5%) grantees reported that their grants specifically addressed tribal populations.

**Figure 1** Grantees serving culturally specific populations by type of population, July 2015–June 2017 (6-month average)



## Staff

Grant-funded staff primarily establish, maintain, and expand coordinated community responses within their catchment areas; and provide victim services, including advocacy, crisis intervention, legal assistance, court and hospital accompaniment, and transportation. **Being able to hire staff is critical to the overall function and success of programs.**

- **37** (97%) grantees used funds for staffing needs.
- Grantees funded an average of **38** full-time equivalent (FTE) staff during each 6-month period.
- Grantees most often used these staffing funds to support victim advocates, counselors, and program coordinators.

**Table 1** | Staff supported with SASP-CS grant funds, July 2015–June 2017:  
Selected groups

Staff funded	6-month average	
<b>Total FTE staff funded</b>	<b>38</b>	
Victim advocates	<b>12</b>	<b>32%</b>
Counselors	<b>9</b>	<b>24%</b>
Program coordinators	<b>9</b>	<b>24%</b>
Administrators	<b>4</b>	<b>11%</b>

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

## Victim Services

Grantees address the specific cultural needs of victims, and may provide crisis intervention, safety planning, and services such as legal advocacy, medical and counseling services from healthcare professionals, and accompaniment to forensic exams and to court. **These comprehensive support services address a wide variety of needs to help victims become and remain safe from violence.**

- **37** (97%) grantees used funds for victim services.
- Grantees provided services to an average of **1,095** victims during each 6-month period.
- **98%** of victims who sought services received them during each 6-month period.



### NY • Grantee Perspective

The SASP Culturally Specific Program funding has enabled Shalom Task Force (STF) to build a successful ongoing relationship with our partner agency, the Mount Sinai Beth Israel Support for Orthodox Victims of Rape and Incest (SOVRI) Helpline, which has enabled both agencies to increase their capacity to serve Orthodox Jewish sexual assault victims. STF has trained 20 hotline volunteers during the six year grant period, and provided enhanced training on sexual assault to over 100 STF staff members and volunteer advocates.

**SHALOM TASK FORCE, NEW YORK**

*The lack of culturally sensitive and appropriate services can pose daunting barriers to safety, justice, and healing. Victims may choose not to engage in services or may terminate services early if programs fail to incorporate issues of culture and heritage.*

*Grantees used 24 specific languages for these activities: Bambara, Bangla, Burmese, Cantonese, Chinese, English, French, Fulani, Gujarati, Hindi, Ilocano, Japanese, Korean, Lakota, Mandarin, Marathi, Moore, Nepali, Portuguese, Cape Verdean Creole, Spanish, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese.*

*Grantees used 4 specific languages when responding to these requests for information or assistance: English, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish.*



**NY • Grantee Perspective**

An 18-year-old student, born and raised in Korea, moved to the US alone one year ago for her studies. The client was raped by her Taekwondo instructor, who at the time was posing as her mentor. Immediately after the incident, she went to the local police station alone and reported the rape without any interpretation or support services. She was brought to the hospital for a medical forensic exam but after that she never heard back from either the police or the hospital for the follow-up. One full week after the incident, the client came to the Korean American Family Service Center (KAFSC) for the intake assessment after getting connected to KAFSC services through her roommate. Confused and overwhelmed, the client displayed clear signs of severe trauma, which was affecting her ability to think clearly and take necessary actions. The KAFSC counselor, experienced in such cases of sexual assault trauma, calmly explained the next steps, and offered emotional support. She contacted the police and followed up with the detective and hospital. In the meantime, the client received weekly trauma-focused counseling and relaxation therapy to restore her psychological and emotional balance. She referred to the immigration attorney to begin her U-visa application. The client is already showing progress in her recovery and is looking forward to starting college this fall.

**KOREAN AMERICAN FAMILY SERVICE CENTER, NEW YORK**

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

- Support group/counseling services to **762** victims;
- Victim advocacy services to **542** victims;
- Crisis intervention services to **476** victims;
- Language services (i.e. interpretation or translation) to **228** victims;
- Civil legal advocacy services to **227** victims;
- Material assistance (e.g. clothing, food, or personal items) to **179** victims; and
- Transportation services to **160** victims.

**Other services:**

- Victim-witness notification/victim outreach services were used a total of **7,437** times;
- Grantees received a total of **9,227** hotline calls; and
  - Nearly half of these calls (**47%**) came from victims.

**During each 6-month period, on average, grantees provided assistance with the following immigration matters:**

- U visa services for **56** victims;
- VAWA self-petition services for **35** victims;
- T visa services for **18** victims;
- Work authorization services for **14** victims;
- Cancellation of removal matters for **3** victims; and
- Other immigration matters for **23** victims.

Victims Seeking Services

Grantees serve victims of sexual assault.

Table 2   Victims seeking services with SASP-CS grant funds, July 2015–June 2017		
Victims seeking services	6-month average	
Total victims seeking services	1,122	
Victims served	1,057	94%
Victims partially served	38	3%
Victims not served	27	2%

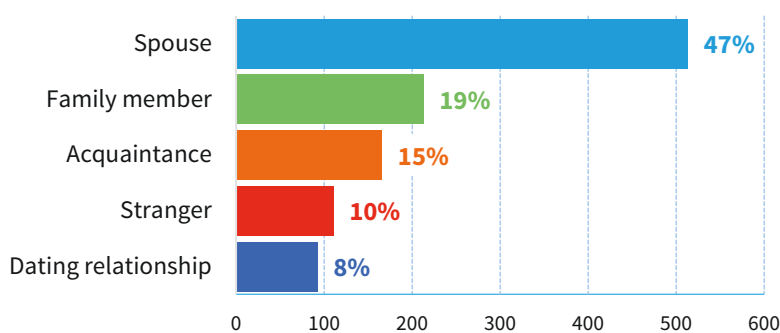
**NOTE:** “Partially served” represents victims who received some but not all of the service(s) they requested, provided those services were funded under the SASP-CS grant. “Not served” represents victims who sought services and did not receive the service(s) they were seeking, provided those services were funded under the SASP-CS grant.

## Victims' Relationship to Offender

Grantees serve victims of sexual assault. Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2017:

- The victims most frequently served or partially served were victimized by a **spouse or intimate partner** (47%).
- The remaining victims were most commonly victimized by another **family or household member** (19%) or by an **acquaintance** (15%).

**Figure 2** | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Sexual assault**  
(6-month average)



### CA • Grantee Perspective

As a result of this funding Centro La Familia Advocacy (CLFA) Victim Advocates have been able to provide sexual assault intervention services, outreach education, workshops, and support groups to our target population. We have been able to reach and intervene on behalf of Hispanic clients who have been victims of sexual abuse. Through our culturally sensitive approach and training, Victim Advocates have been able to effectively work with victims, providing them with a confidential environment to tell their story and report their crime. Some clients have reported that they would not have otherwise spoken up about it had they not learned about our services because they didn't know who to go to. The fact that we are able to provide services in their native language provides comfort to clients who might not know where to go or who to turn to for support.

**CENTRO LA FAMILIA ADVOCACY SERVICES, INC., CALIFORNIA**

## 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:

- Limited resources/priority setting;
- Services were not appropriate for victim;
- Services inappropriate or inadequate for victims with mental health issues;
- Transportation;
- Hours of operation; or
- Insufficient/lack of language capacity (including sign language).

## Demographics of Victims Served and Partially Served

Grantees served or partially served an average of **1,095** victims during each 6-month period. The victims most frequently served or partially served were **Hispanic or Latina** (42%), **female** (96%), and between the ages of **25 and 59** (77%).



### NY • Grantee Perspective

The grant funding has allowed Support for Orthodox Victims of Rape and Incest (SOVRI) to increase outreach by organizing speakers to address the issues of sexual abuse in the Orthodox community. This has given way to more people seeking out the SOVRI helpline both as victims and as individuals who are interested in volunteering for the helpline.

SHALOM TASK FORCE, NEW YORK

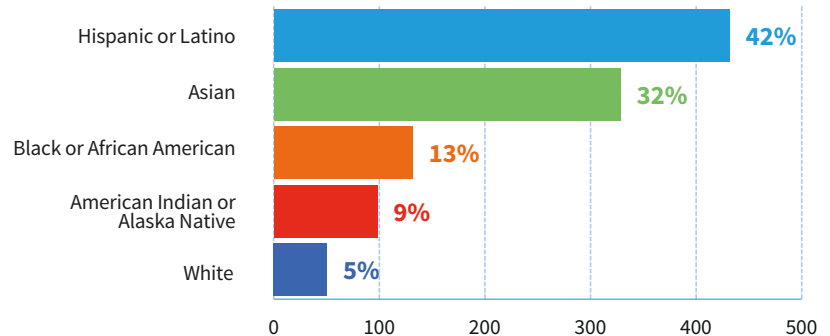


### MN • Grantee Perspective

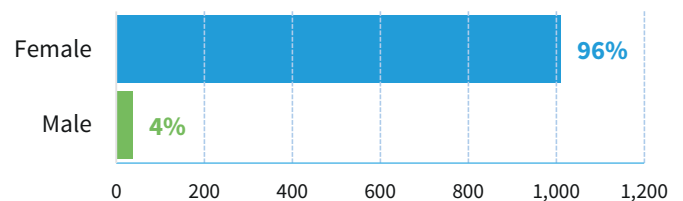
Funding has allowed us to serve more survivors. During this reporting period, 30 primary victims and 45 secondary victims were served. Twenty of these victims are receiving mental health therapy. Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) has been able to improve its in-house referral process for sexual assault survivors and we have ensured that they are able to access this service in a timely, coordinated manner. Ninety percent of the victims were provided with accompaniment through criminal justice, medical, and other support systems.

COMUNIDADES LATINAS UNIDAS EN SERVICIO,  
MINNESOTA

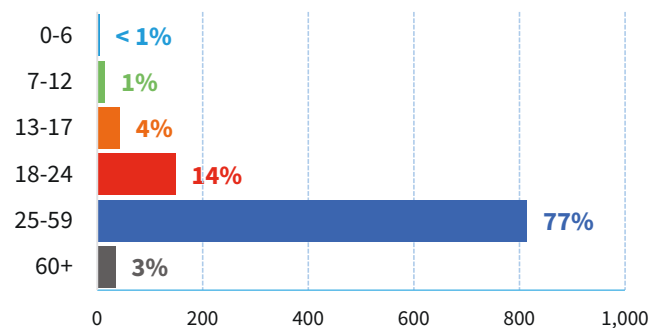
**Figure 3** Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Race/ethnicity** (6-month average)



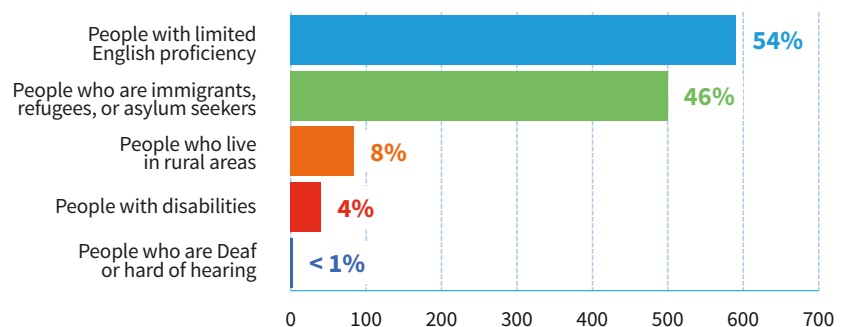
**Figure 4** Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Gender** (6-month average)



**Figure 5** Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Age** (6-month average)



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



## Secondary Victims

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

- Grantees provided services to an average of **380** secondary victims during each 6-month period.

## Remaining Areas of Need

Grantees most frequently cited **victims' reluctance to access services and report crimes** as their biggest obstacle to providing services. They attributed this reluctance to a number of factors, including:

- Cultural taboos around discussions of sexual violence;
- Familial pressures to refrain from reporting or disclosing sexual assault;
- Mistrust of law enforcement and fear of deportation;
- A lack of confidentiality and anonymity within some communities;
- Lack of language access and cultural sensitivity among criminal justice professionals;
- Financial and social dependence on abusers;
- Insufficient knowledge of legal rights; and
- Insufficient legal accountability for offenders.

Grantees called for **more community education and outreach** in order to:

- Inform victims of their legal rights;
- Educate communities about sexual assault and healthy relationships;
- Combat victim-blaming and negative stereotypes about victims; and
- Publicize available resources.

Several grantees emphasized the need to provide **training to law enforcement, first responders, and service providers on culturally sensitive, trauma-informed practices**.

Grantees frequently cited challenges in **assisting victims in meeting basic needs**, such as:

- Shelter/housing;
- Transportation;
- Child care;
- Food; and
- Healthcare costs.



### GA • Grantee Perspective

In 2015, Raksha conducted several focus groups, community-based meetings, and informal meetings within metro Atlanta's immigrant and refugee communities. While hosting these events, we discovered that Limited English Proficiency (LEP) victims face unique language related challenges when attempting to report sexual violence. Additionally, survivors of violence frequently report difficulty escaping abusive situations due to many barriers they faced, such as limited ability in English, access to resources, financial and housing difficulties, threat to child custody, immigration status, etc. Moreover, they are often made to feel that they will not be believed by their abusers and their abusers make themselves appear more powerful than any judicial system. The legal system sometimes reinforces those feelings for individuals who have tried to leave their abusive households.

**RAKSHA, INC., GEORGIA**



### NY • Grantee Perspective

The biggest barrier to providing services for sexual assault victims in the Orthodox Jewish community is getting them in the door. Victims' access to information and intervention services is often limited by community customs and mores which may discourage the use of resources from the secular world. The targeted communities are insular and as a result victims have a difficult time obtaining support for themselves as victims of sexual assault. Although there has been tremendous growth within the Orthodox Jewish community with regard to sexual abuse, it is still considered a taboo topic to many.

**SHALOM TASK FORCE, NEW YORK**



### OH • Grantee Perspective

The response by police and the criminal justice system to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) victims of sexual assault leaves much to be desired. Interpreters are regularly inadequate (poor training, unprofessional, and/or not trained to work with victims of sexual assault) or unavailable (many local police officers are unaware of how to contact the Language Line for interpreter assistance). Court officials have chosen not to accept victims' forms of identification if they were issued by other countries and 911 operators have had discussions with interpreters while victims are on the line, instead of having them interpret.

**OHIO HISPANIC COALITION**



#### NY • Grantee Perspective

In addition to outreach to direct consumers of the services (i.e. primary victims of SA), resources and education [need to be] extended to “informal” support systems - including churches, doctors’ offices, supermarkets, small businesses. Possible consumers of services frequent such places for other needs and training and educating the constituents of those systems can provide another avenue for victims to access help and ultimately gain accessibility to services. Enhancement of community response through a more open and culture specific dialogue is particularly needed in the Asian community due to the collectivist nature of this population. A force greater than the individual itself is necessary for victims to get increased accessibility. Through the community assessment, service providers can gain a better understanding of how to formulate relationships and find common language about sexual violence with the Asian community in a non-judgmental, destigmatizing manner.

**THE KOREAN-AMERICAN FAMILY SERVICES CENTER, INC., NEW YORK**

Many grantees also mentioned a need for more **culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate mental healthcare services**.

Finally, several grantees noted a need for **greater awareness of and improved services to underserved victims within their communities, including:**

- LGBTQ victims;
- Male victims;
- International students;
- Youth victims; and
- Victims of human trafficking.



#### NY • Grantee Perspective

One of the main areas of remaining need, with regard to improving services to sexual assault survivors, remains the provision of culturally-nuanced and linguistically-tailored mental health services. Sakhi staff do their utmost to provide clients with as much emotional support as they can to help clients cope with the physical and emotional effects of the sexual violence that they have been subjected to and to help them move forward in life. However, the trauma of sexual assault is deep rooted and very often what clients really need is a qualified mental health counselor who can work with the client to really overcome and slowly slowly move past their experiences. Sakhi regularly refers clients out to trusted hospitals, doctors, and therapists to receive the services that they desperately need. However, the number of therapists who don’t require patients to be insured and who have a deep understanding of the myriad cultural aspects that go into the sexual victimizations of South Asian women is too few. Therefore, our clients very often remain inadequately served - or not served at all.

**SAKHI FOR SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN, NEW YORK**