

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.

185 Grantees Reporting

Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019, 185 unique grantees reported activities funded by the Rural Program.

12,463 Victims Served

On average, grantees served or partially served 12,463 victims during each 6-month reporting period.

1,093 Calls for Assistance

Grantees fielded a total of 1,093 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 (Adi, 2016; Peek-Asa et al., 2011).





Collaboration between victim advocacy organizations and criminal justice agencies, known as a coordinated community response (CCR), frames all VAWA grantees' efforts to address domestic/sexual violence.

Research shows that strategies to combat domestic/sexual violence are most effective when combined and integrated in this way (Beldin et al., 2015; DePrince et al., 2012; Family Justice Center Alliance, 2013; Gagnon et al., 2018; Greeson et al., 2016; Robinson & Payton, 2016; Rosen et al., 2018; Shepard & Pence, 1999).



ME • Grantee Perspective

A wealth of programming developments and additional resources for victims and survivors have been enabled by this funding. Advocates have documented an increase in referrals for direct services from hospitals, healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies, schools, and community members. Advocates have conducted greater outreach to healthcare providers, as evidenced by "Health Cares About DV Day," participation in strangulation trainings for nursing staff, and careful relationship building with emergency departments. Advocates are now present in all of the courts serving our rural region, which has improved the accessibility of court advocacy and accompaniment for survivors and victims. This has also enriched relationships with court clerks, who made several referrals to services during this grant period.

PARTNERS FOR PEACE, MAINE



The Rural Program includes a purpose area which focuses on high-risk cases and the prevention of domestic/dating violence homicides. One tool used by grantees is the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP). The LAP is an evidence-based intervention used by law enforcement in 37 states when responding to victims of domestic violence. Responding officers employing the LAP engage domestic violence victims in assessing the levels of risk posed by their intimate partners, and facilitate their access to victim services. When first responders use the LAP process, the frequency and severity of violence decrease, and victims may adopt protective strategies and seek help more often (Campbell et al., 2017; Dutton et al., 2017; Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, 2018; Messing et al., 2014, 2016; Messing, Campbell et al., 2015).

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;
- Work cooperatively with rural communities to develop education and prevention strategies that address their unique social, economic, and geographic conditions;
- 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.

General Grant Information

Information for this report was submitted by **185** individual grantees for the July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019 progress reporting period.

- **47** (25%) grantees reported that their grants specifically addressed tribal populations.
- Grantees most frequently addressed the following purpose area:
 - Provide 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.**

- **175** (95%) grantees used funds for staffing needs.
- Grantees funded an average of **359** 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 1 | Staff supported with Rural grant funds, July 2017–June 2019: **Selected groups**

Staff funded	6-month average	
Total FTE staff funded	359	
Victim advocates	146	41%
Program coordinators	50	14%
Administrators	22	6%
Trainers	20	6%

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

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.**

- **131** (71%) grantees used funds for training.
- Grantees convened a total of **2,594** training events.
- Grantees trained a total of **36,656** people.
- Most often these trainings reached victim advocates (**16%**), health professionals (**12%**), law enforcement officers (**12%**), and educators (**9%**).

Community Education

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

- **133** (72%) grantees used funds for community education.
- Grantees hosted a total of **8,487** education events.
- Grantees educated a total of **265,816** people.

Table 2 | People educated with Rural grant funds, July 2017–June 2019: **Selected groups**

People educated	2-year total	
Total people educated	265,816	
Community members	101,496	38%
Middle and high school students	69,172	26%
Elementary school students	30,773	12%
University or college students	22,716	9%

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

OR • Grantee Perspective



The Rural Program has allowed the District Attorney's Office Victim's Assistance Program (DA-VAP), Proyecto UNICA and Clackamas Women's Services to fund three full-time advocates and improve response to rural service areas, as well as the number of services that are offered to rural survivors. Each advocate provides comprehensive direct services and specializes in their own area of expertise. Some survivors may access one or all three partners depending on their need for support and advocacy. Each advocate is mobile and can meet with survivors in their homes, in the community, or at our small satellite office in Sandy. Additionally, the DA-VAP Advocate has developed relationships with law enforcement agencies and is able to respond with them or with the DA-VA Investigator on-scene or in their homes.

CLACKAMAS WOMEN'S SERVICES, OREGON

A recent study showed that training law enforcement officers on the dynamics of trauma in the context of sexual and domestic violence can reduce their misperceptions regarding victim behavior and potentially improve outcomes related to victim well-being, case attrition, and public safety (Franklin et al., 2019). Another study demonstrated that training can encourage officers' use of best practices in interviews with sexual assault victims, but that these outcomes are influenced by officers' attitudes toward victims. These findings demonstrate the need for widespread education aimed at shifting perceptions of victim credibility (Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018).



AK • Grantee Perspective



These funds have allowed us to provide training opportunities and technical assistance for Village Advocates and village sexual assault victim response providers from the tribe, as identified by Bristol Bay Native Association Family Services Program. It has allowed us to supplement utility costs of facilities we use for Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners, events, victim services, support groups, and trainings. These funds have allowed us to provide Village Advocates with cell phones and/or landlines that are secure and separate from their personal/home use phones. These funds have also allowed us to provide office supplies and equipment to our Village Advocates, which they would not be able to get in their villages.

SAFE AND FEAR FREE ENVIRONMENT, INC., ALASKA

ⁱ 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 their response to victims as it relates to their role in the system.



Beyond geographic obstacles, victims residing in rural areas may face a complex interweaving of cultural, psychological, emotional, and systemic barriers to resources. Small, isolated communities may prioritize family privacy, traditional gender roles, and keeping families intact, even when violence presents a potentially fatal threat (DeKeseredy et al., 2016; Shepard & Hagemaster, 2013).



UT • Grantee Perspective

Because of the Rural Program funding, our Center is the only agency in the region offering parenting classes for community members and psychoeducational classes to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Classes are taught in both English and Spanish, and are available with sign language interpreters upon request. Last year we offered 16 parenting classes for community members and 24 psychoeducational classes for victims of rape and sexual assault in Wasatch and Juab Counties. We also provided over 300 sessions of individual therapy which has made a significant difference in the mental health of many survivors. This important program continues to perform a vital role in these communities.

CENTER FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CRISIS, UTAH



Tribal • Grantee Perspective

Funding allowed the Kalispel Tribe to develop an agency with full wrap-around services to assist victims and survivors of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Services now include legal, medical, and cultural advocacy; counseling; support groups; and financial assistance for such things as rent and utility assistance, gas vouchers, food, and emergency clothing. We continue to collaborate with surrounding agencies within the Tribe and community, building trust with community members and improving services. We have been able to provide a safe and confidential place for clients to come, making it possible for victims/survivors to come forward to seek assistance and a life change. This funding has also allowed us to purchase a vehicle for the Kalispel Tribe Victim Assistance Services. Mobile Advocacy is the most effective way we do our work. It allows us to meet clients where they feel most comfortable and safe and where the advocate is safe, as well.

KALISPEL TRIBE OF INDIANS

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.**

- **158** (85%) grantees used funds for victim services.
- Grantees provided services to an average of **12,694** victims during each 6-month period.
- **99%** of victims who sought services received them during each 6-month period.

On average, during each 6-month reporting period, Rural grantees provided services to **12,694 INDIVIDUALS.**

Services include:



24,608
**VICTIM-WITNESS
NOTIFICATION/VICTIM
OUTREACH SERVICES**



124,437
HOTLINE CALLS

Across the 2-year period, grantees most frequently provided the following services:ⁱⁱ

- Victim advocacy services **127,287** times;
- Crisis intervention services **55,334** times;
- Support group/counseling services **47,849** times; and
- Civil legal advocacy services **28,428** times.

ⁱⁱThe Rural Program, Tribal Governments Program, and Tribal Jurisdictions Program are unique in that grantees are asked to report the number of times each type of service is provided. This allows for the reporting of an unduplicated count of number of services, despite the duplicated count of number of victims served.

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.

Shelter services	Victims (6-month average)	Family members (6-month average)	Bed nights (2-year total)
Emergency shelter	847	616	113,027
Transitional housing	40	32	19,023
Total	887	648	132,050

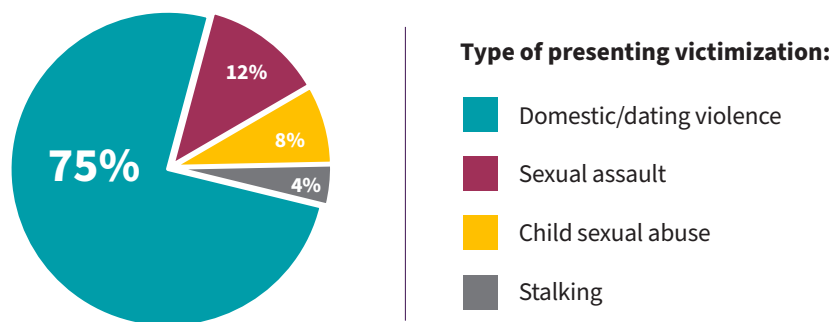
Victims Seeking Services

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence and child sexual abuse. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victims of **domestic/dating violence** (75%).

Figure 1 | Provision of victim services by Rural Program grantees, by type of presenting victimization

Victims served and partially served by type of victimization (6-month average)



Victims seeking services	6-month average	
Total victims seeking services	12,796	
Victims served	12,425	97%
Victims partially served	270	2%
Victims not served	102	1%

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.

Rural location can compound the specific barriers to services already faced by disabled, LGBTQ, impoverished, elder, and minority victims (Harley & Teaster, 2018). Features of rural culture can reinforce the normative belief that one should not report domestic/sexual violence because those are private matters (Burnett et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2014). Further, victims might be reluctant to report domestic/sexual violence in rural communities because there are simply practical barriers to maintaining confidentiality and anonymity (Annan, 2011; Fitzsimons et al., 2011; Strand & Storey, 2019).

NV • Grantee Perspective

Rural Program funding provided a seamless collaborative to immediately meet the needs of victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking by following an established protocol to increase victim safety, provide immediate services, and offer future resources. The funding has allowed us to dedicate investigation and victim advocacy personnel to cases of domestic/sexual violence, thus decreasing incident response time, increasing victim trust and cooperation, and enhancing victim safety and offender accountability. Consequently, our conviction rate jumped from 15% pre-Sexual Violence Response Team to 89% during the course of this funding.

DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEVADA

WV • Grantee Perspective

The project has provided significant training and cross-training for first responders. It is enabling services to begin to expand to address emerging issues. An example of that in this report period was the issue of human trafficking. While the rape crisis centers have been tasked with serving trafficking victims, no training accompanied this designation. The project was able to survey the advocates to identify their training needs and design a 4-part training series to build their capacity in areas such as immigration laws, T-Visas/U-Visas, and West Virginia-specific laws and protocols. While significant work remains to fully respond to victims of trafficking, at least a baseline of information has been provided. Rural Program funding has also enabled the seven pilot counties to establish viable sexual assault response teams, coordinated by project-supported advocates.

WEST VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR RAPE INFORMATION AND SERVICES



IL • Grantee Perspective

This funding is allowing our office to better support victims of sexual assault in this five county area of western Illinois. Ultimately, this funding will support improved access to medical forensic care, prosecutorial support for sexual assault cases, and the development of a Regional Rural Sexual Assault Response Team. Because we provide evidence-based, trauma-informed, victim-centered responses, victims of sexual assault will receive the best treatment possible following an assault, which will improve victim engagement in the criminal justice system and increase victim reporting, leading to increased prosecutions of sexual assault.

ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE



WA • Grantee Perspective

The Rural Program funds have allowed us to establish a satellite office in Belfair, Washington. Due to the opening of this office, we have been able to reach out and be a presence in North Mason County, where victims previously could not access services. Before the Belfair office opened, many victims would have to travel long distances to other counties or cities in order to access DV/SA services. These victims often do not have vehicles and rely on local buses or rides from friends for transportation. We have been able to bring support groups, legal advocacy, and a variety of services to this community in need. We are very hopeful we will only continue to grow as the community becomes aware of our presence.

TURNING POINTE SURVIVOR ADVOCACY CENTER, WASHINGTON



A growing body of research indicates that services to rural domestic/sexual violence victims provided using telehealth technologies have the potential to increase access to SANE/SAFE services, mental health counseling, and follow-up medical care (Gray et al., 2015; Walsh et al., 2019).

Victims' Relationships to Offenders

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence and child sexual abuse. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victimized by a **spouse or intimate partner** (65%).
- The remaining victims were most commonly victimized by another **family or household member** (15%) or in the context of a **dating relationship** (11%).

Figure 2 Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Domestic/dating violence** (6-month average)

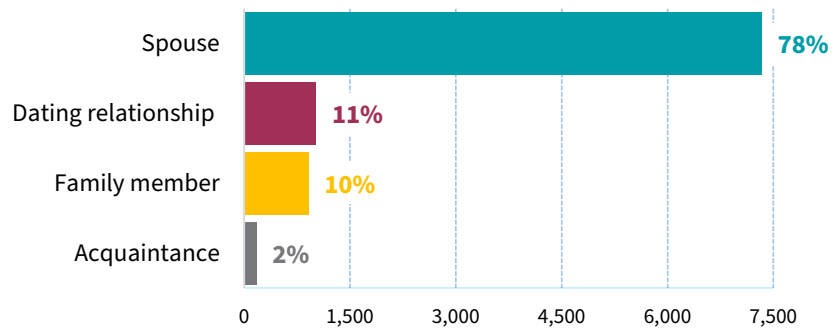


Figure 3 Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Sexual assault** (6-month average)

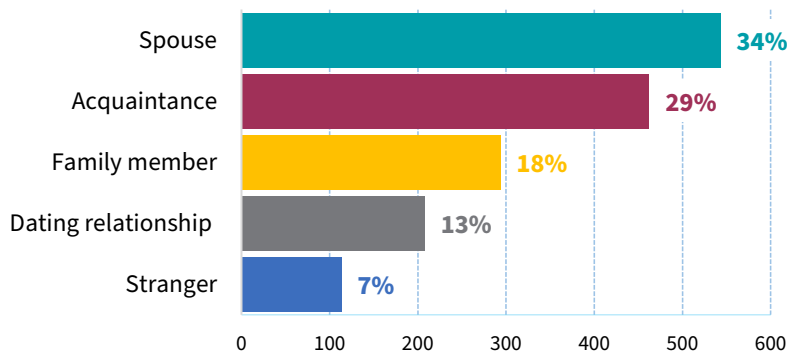


Figure 4 Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Child sexual abuse** (6-month average)

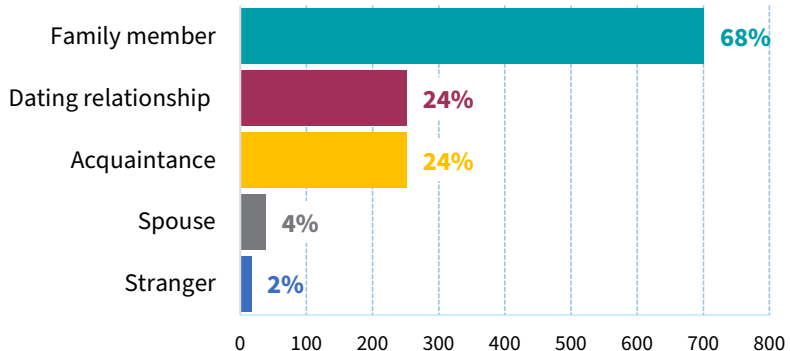
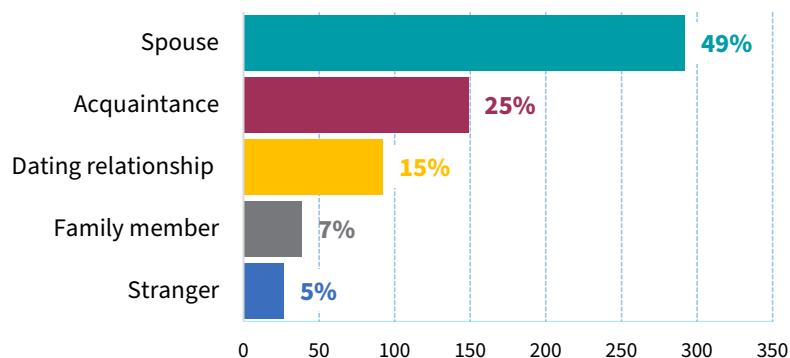


Figure 5 | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Stalking**
(6-month average)



Reasons Victims Were Partially Served

During each reporting period, grantees most frequently noted the following barriers as reasons why victims were only partially served:

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

Reasons Victims Were Not Served

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

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

Demographics of Victims Served and Partially Served

Grantees served or partially served an average of **12,694** victims during each 6-month period. The majority of those victims were **white** (66%), **female** (89%), and between the ages of **25 and 59** (65%).

AK • Grantee Perspective



Rural DV funding is allowing the Alaska Institute for Justice (AIJ), in partnership with domestic violence and sexual assault programs in the rural communities of Bethel and Kodiak, to transform access to critical safety, advocacy, and legal services for underserved survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. In the past six months, we have provided critical services to 119 underserved survivors in rural Alaska, including 35 limited English proficient survivors, and 39 survivors who are immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers. AIJ has partnered with two rural domestic violence and sexual assault programs, Kodiak Women's Resource and Crisis Center and Tundra Women's Coalition, to increase their capacity to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to underserved rural communities. AIJ has made qualified interpretation and translation services available to limited English proficient survivors and provided 597 hours of interpretation and translation services for survivors from the start of this grant through June 2018.

ALASKA INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE

Efforts to protect American Indian and Alaska Native victims are often complicated because many live in isolated rural communities with limited or no access to cellular/landline phone services, transportation, or emergency care, and limited criminal justice, legal assistance, and safe housing resources. Getting to or receiving services can often be tremendously challenging. Frequently, incidents of domestic violence are underreported or undocumented because victims are not able to obtain assistance from police or medical professionals. Less than one-third of Native American land is within a 60-minute driving distance of healthcare centers that offer SART/SANE services (Juraska et al., 2014; Petillo, 2013).





Multiple studies have shown that services offered to domestic violence victims, such as shelter, advocacy, support groups, and counseling, have positively impacted their short- and long-term safety, mental health, and sense of self-efficacy (Sullivan, 2018).



NM • Grantee Perspective

We have had the ability to expand and provide services that were not available before in the extremely rural tri-county areas such as the Pecos mountains, Ribera, Anton Chico, Mora community, and surrounding areas. We are able to go to the client when necessary, and clients have a choice of where they can go to get services. We handle more crisis situations, have more partners who collaborate with us, the community is more aware of DV, and we have obtained more community, agency, and business involvement to help our clients because we are more visible. We have been able to expand our programs at the main office and offer more cultural, spiritual, and holistic programs which are tailored to the area. We have added three new programs: Grief and Loss, Dress for Success, and a Wellness Program, which consists of yoga, exercise, meditation, and relaxation. Because of the outreach, the Tri-County Family Justice Center has expanded collaborative efforts within the community. We have been successful with our internship program with one of New Mexico's major universities (Highlands University), where we now obtain students for internships from the social work, psychology, and guidance counseling departments. We have had the ability to open the first safe room/forensic unit in the history of the tri-county area for sexual assault. We are on the last stages working with a committee to open a camp for children, and we are currently working on establishing a stress relief program through acupuncture and massage.

**TRI-COUNTY FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER
OF NORTHEAST NEW MEXICO**

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

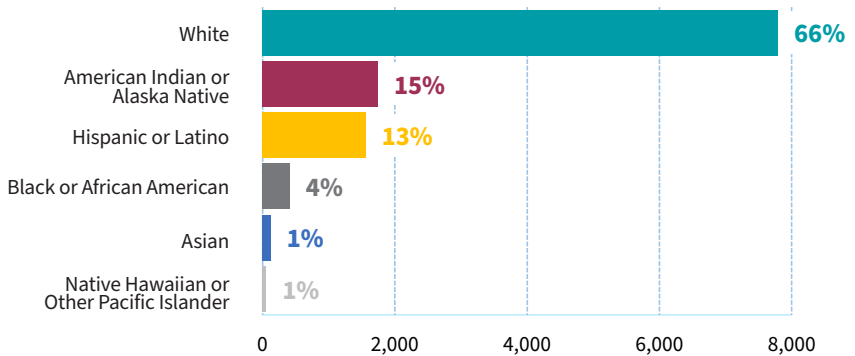


Figure 7 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Gender** (6-month average)

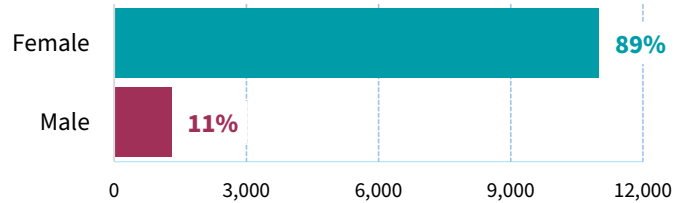


Figure 8 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Age** (6-month average)

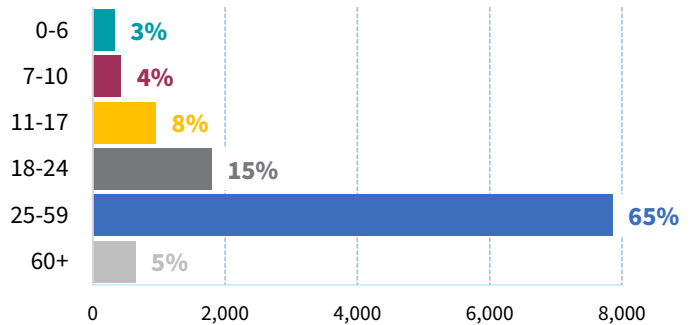
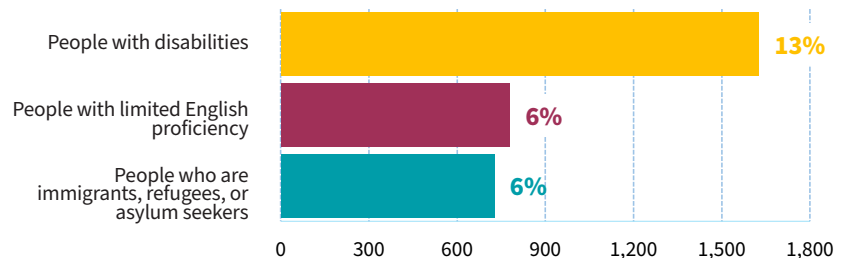


Figure 9 Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Other** (6-month average)



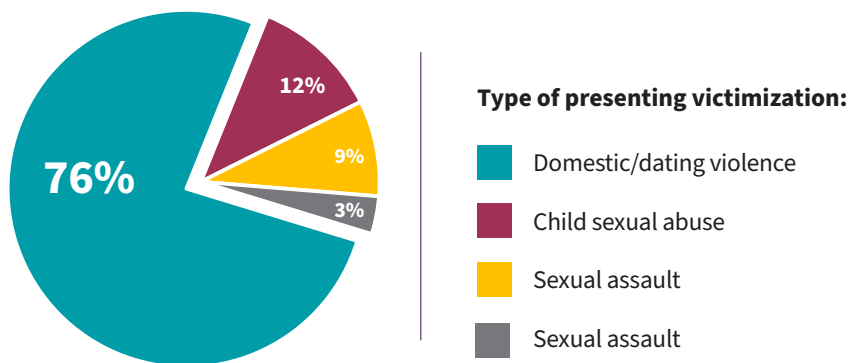
Secondary Victims

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 **4,846** secondary victims during each 6-month period.

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

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



Legal Services

Grant-funded lawyers, paralegals, and specially appointed advocates provide legal services to victims.

- **30** (16%) grantees used funds for legal services.
- Grantees addressed an average of **2,087** legal issues during each 6-month reporting period.
- Grantees provided legal services to an average of **1,083** victims every 6 months.
- Grantees provided multiple instances of legal services to an average of **304** victims every 6 months (28% of those receiving legal services).

Grantees most frequently provided legal assistance with protection orders and custody/visitation.

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.

VT • Grantee Perspective



The Rural grant has allowed us to have more interaction with Valley Vista, the substance abuse rehab in Vergennes, Vermont. We have a point-person at the rehab who connects us with residents who might have been affected by domestic or sexual violence. We started this work in the past grant round and have been building stronger relationships with residents at Valley Vista. Because we have been able to have so much interaction there, we have been able to start an educational support group around healthy relationships, consent and boundaries, and how substance dependency and domestic/sexual violence commonly intersect. Since this group started, we have had five disclosures. This funding and partnership with Valley Vista also allows us to work with the staff to make sure every survivor displaced by domestic violence has a safe place to exit to that will also support their recovery, making them less vulnerable and more empowered than when they entered recovery.

WOMEN SAFE, INC., VERMONT

MN • Grantee Perspective



This funding has allowed us to establish a presence in the community. Prior to receiving this funding, we had a very limited staff, all living and working in Sevier County. We responded to four other counties in our coverage area using volunteers and staff during the day. Attendance at meetings and interaction with victims was very limited due to such a small staff and having to travel long distances. Previously, we were only being called when shelter services were requested. We now have outreach offices open in three other counties. We have hired advocates in each of these counties who live locally and are able to be in touch with community needs. Our bilingual advocate is also able to work at the shelter to provide the care and resources needed to Spanish-speaking families, as well as meeting with victims who are not in shelter. Having local staff in these counties will assist in growing relationships with law enforcement and prosecutors. Simply having the ability to continually educate these communities on available resources and services will improve the number of victims who are aware of and will access services. There is a faster response to victims having an advocate who is local, and also able to spend more time with them.

NEW HORIZONS CRISIS CENTER, MINNESOTA



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 (Hamby et al., 2015).



VT • Grantee Perspective

Have Justice Will Travel, Inc. (HJWT) is often the only access to representation a victim will have. Many clients are able to contact our office by telephone prior to their administrative protective order hearings, and many are able to either meet with the attorney at their home, if it is safe, or another convenient location. In some cases, the attorney will be able to have a telephone conference with the client to discuss the facts surrounding his or her complaint for relief, and prepare for the upcoming hearing.

If a victim has been able to contact HJWT prior to the hearing and cannot arrange for transportation, the attorney will pick up the client to ensure they get to court. HJWT provides representation and advice to victims in legal matters from divorce and child support, to landlord/tenant matters. Victim advocates working with HJWT MOU partners refer victims to HJWT for a variety of legal issues which are either handled by the HJWT attorney, or referred to the appropriate legal agency to handle. HJWT is able to assist clients and give them the support and knowledge necessary to represent themselves in cases when the HJWT attorney is unable to enter a notice of appearance. Without the Rural Program funding, we would not have been able to help these clients and many others to successfully move forward with their lives, obtain the orders that will allow them to break from the violence and abuse, and open new and healthy chapters in their lives.

HAVE JUSTICE WILL TRAVEL, INC., VERMONT

Law Enforcement

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

- **21** (11%) grantees used funds for law enforcement activities.
- Law enforcement staff made a total of **2,926** victim referrals to governmental and non-governmental victim services across the 2-year period.

A proactive response and victim-centered attitude influence 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 involves listening to the victim about what they want and need in tandem with Rural grant-funded activities including :

- 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.

Table 5 Law enforcement activities in Rural Program criminal cases, July 2017–June 2019

Law enforcement activities	Sexual assault	Domestic/dating violence	Stalking	Child sexual abuse	Total
Calls for assistance	201	871	65	220	1,357
Incident reports	311	1,257	53	552	2,173
Cases investigated	574	3,521	100	829	5,024
Referrals to prosecutor	288	926	35	514	1,763
Arrests of predominant aggressor	103	332	19	185	639

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 found it particularly difficult to serve victims in rural areas, where **vast distances, challenging economic conditions, and physical isolation** presented **significant barriers** to helping victims escape violence and achieve self-sufficiency.

Of the problems inherent in rural areas, some of the most challenging were:

- Lack of law enforcement;
- Low availability of SANE services;
- Services that were not culturally or linguistically appropriate;
- Lack of offender accountability; and
- Limited or non-existent batterer intervention programs.

Due in part to the scarcity of services in rural areas, grantees reported **extreme challenges in helping victims meet basic needs**, particularly:

- Transportation;
- Affordable long-term housing and emergency shelter;
- Mental health care and substance abuse counseling;
- Civil legal assistance;
- Education and employment; and
- Childcare.

Rural grantees also reported **significant gaps** in available services, especially for **underserved populations**, including:

- Immigrant and refugee victims;
- Child victims;
- LGBTQ victims;
- American Indians or Alaska Natives; and
- Seniors and persons with one or more disabilities.

Grantees cited a number of reasons **service providers, law enforcement, and the court system struggled to fully serve these populations**, including:

- Cultural and linguistic barriers;
- Geographic and physical isolation;
- Victims' fear of discrimination or challenges maintaining anonymity;
- Fear of deportation; and
- Difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified personnel.

ME • Grantee Perspective



One of the greatest impacts Rural funding has made in Oxford County is throughout the criminal justice system. One vital difference has been the DV/SA specialized prosecutor, who has been able to prioritize the needs of victims and increase offender accountability. Specifically, the role has made a significant impact around high numbers of cases being referred to deferred disposition. Since 2016, cases accepted by prosecution have increased 22%, and the most recent reporting period showed that the percentage of cases being referred to deferred disposition had decreased from 14% to 8%, compared to the same period in 2016. Additionally, Rural funding has immensely altered Safe Voices' capacity to serve survivors and victims in the criminal court process and Superior Courts. Since 2017, we have had a 92% increase in the survivors who received criminal justice advocacy.

SAFE VOICES, MAINE

KS • Grantee Perspective



Language access continues as a significant area of remaining need for limited English proficient and Deaf and Hard of Hearing victims/survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. For marginalized and underserved populations, accessing services is already difficult, but if language access is a barrier, their needs often go unmet.

KANSAS COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

NY • Grantee Perspective



A significant area of need is training for law enforcement. While Rural-funded staff continue to build strong partnerships with the District Attorney's office and members of law enforcement, training on domestic and sexual violence victimization, victim sensitivity, trauma-informed response and how to connect victims to our services would help address gaps in services and increase victim's participation in the criminal justice system. Rural-funded staff continue to reach out to offer trainings, but find that it is difficult for law enforcement agencies to find the time to accommodate these trainings. While staff make it a priority to stress the advantages of these trainings and that further education and collaboration with Services to Aid Families will only increase victims' access to services and create more positive and fruitful interactions between law enforcement and victims, staff continue to experience barriers in getting into these agencies to provide training.

OSWEGO COUNTY OPPORTUNITIES, INC., NEW YORK



ME • Grantee Perspective

In terms of serving underserved populations, specifically refugees and immigrant victims and survivors of assault, major barriers remain.

The first involves education to refugee and immigrant communities in their language of choice about abuse (domestic and child abuse), laws and rights, and resources that exist to address these issues. This should also include training of interpreters on issues of domestic violence and child abuse, warning signs and reporting, and confidentiality in order to ensure that the privacy of community members is maintained. Education and discussion of these issues should also take place for youth in order to combat the stigma that so often exists related to domestic violence, and ensure that the next generation is more informed and aware of these issues. For refugee and immigrant communities, there is often a lack of culturally and linguistically accessible services for victims, and those who do reach out for services are often concerned about the community backlash they may receive by doing so, which may be as isolating as the abuse itself. Addressing these remaining gaps means developing more linguistically and culturally appropriate resources related to domestic violence, training existing providers on cultural awareness and humility, and providing community education to a range of different groups and ages within the Lakes Region.

THROUGH THESE DOORS, MAINE

Grantees additionally stressed the need to **expand training on the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence to law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges** in order to **increase offender accountability**.

Finally, grantees reported ongoing needs for **community education and outreach** in order to:

- Combat stigma and negative stereotypes about victims of sexual assault and domestic violence;
- Inform victims and community members of available services; and
- Teach young people about healthy relationships.