

Violence Against Women Act Summary

The Office on Violence Against Women is a component of the United States Department of Justice. In recognition of the severity of the crimes associated with domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (VAWA 1994) as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. VAWA is a comprehensive legislative package designed to end violence against women and was reauthorized in both 2000 and 2005. The legislative history of VAWA indicates that Congress seeks to remedy the legacy of laws and social norms that serve to justify violence against women. Since the passage of VAWA, there has been a paradigm shift in how the issue of violence against women is addressed.

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) was created specifically to implement (VAWA) and subsequent legislation. OVW administers financial and technical assistance to communities around the country to facilitate the creation of programs, policies, and practices aimed at ending domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

VAWA was designed to improve criminal justice responses to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking and to increase the availability of services for victims of these crimes. VAWA requires a coordinated community response (CCR) to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, encouraging jurisdictions to bring together players from diverse backgrounds to share information and to use their distinct roles to improve community responses to violence against women. These players include, but are not limited to: victim advocates, police officers, prosecutors, judges, probation and corrections officials, health care professionals, leaders within faith communities, and survivors of violence against women. The federal law takes a comprehensive approach to violence against women by combining tough new penalties to prosecute offenders while implementing programs to aid the victims of such violence.

The Violence Against Women Act of 2000 (VAWA 2000) and the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005 (VAWA 2005) reauthorized the grant programs created by the original VAWA and subsequent legislation, as well as established new programs. Specifically, the new programs of VAWA 2005 include the Court Training and Improvements, Child Witness, and Culturally Specific programs. The VAWA 2000 reauthorization strengthened the original law by improving protections for battered immigrants, sexual assault survivors, and victims of dating violence. In addition, it enabled victims of domestic violence that flee across state lines to obtain custody orders without returning to jurisdictions where they may be in danger. Furthermore, it improved the enforcement of protection orders across state and tribal lines. VAWA 2005 continued to improve upon these laws by providing an increased focus on the access to services for underserved populations.

In 2002, legislation was passed that made OVW a permanent part of the Department of Justice with a Presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed Director. Since 1994, OVW has awarded more than \$3 billion in grant funds to state, tribal, and local governments, non-profit victim services providers.

Local Domestic Violence Contact Information

Crime Victims Assistance Center Crisis Line – (607) 722-4256

SOS Shelter 24 Hour Hotline –(607) 754-4340

New York State Domestic Violence Hotline – 1-800-942-6906