



VAWA

WHAT TO KNOW

The Violence Against Women Act

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a lifeline to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking throughout the country and here in Pennsylvania.

Support for VAWA programming and funding is critical in protecting our communities from harm and in helping victims access the help, hope, and healing they need and deserve.

1 VAWA saves lives.

Since VAWA's passage in 1994, there have been consistent decreases in rates of rape and sexual assault, domestic violence homicide, and nonfatal domestic violence (Planty, Langton, Krebs, Berzofsky, & Smiley-McDonald, 2016).

- **Annual rates of sexual violence have declined** by 58% from 1994 to 2010.
- **Intimate partner homicide rates have declined** by 35% for women and 46% for men between 1993 and 2007.

2 VAWA saves money.

Studies confirm that the benefits of VAWA far outweigh its costs, making it a fiscally efficient law.

- **Sexual violence is the most costly violent crime in the U.S.**, incurring over \$127 billion per year in both tangible (i.e., medical care, criminal justice, lost wages, treatment) and intangible (i.e., pain and suffering) costs (National Alliance to End Sexual Violence [NAESV], n.d.a).
- VAWA costs approximately \$1.6 billion to implement, **but has saved our country \$14.8 billion in averted social costs** since its inception (Clark, Biddle, & Martin, 2002).
- Serving an individual victim costs approximately \$15.50, yet **prevents upwards of \$47.00 of social and collateral costs** per person (Clark et al., 2002).

3 VAWA benefits our entire community.

We are all affected by sexual assault—either directly or indirectly. When we help a victim, we help a community. Since VAWA's inception, collaborations among law enforcement, criminal justice, advocates, and medical

professionals have strengthened, which have resulted in more effective crime investigations, prosecutions, and victim services. Our communities are safer because of VAWA. VAWA funds prevention strategies that stop sexual violence from occurring in the first place, preventing harm toward our children, families, and loved ones. Innovative strategies—with growing evaluative data—have made significant strides in preventing sexual violence where we learn, live, play, pray, and work.

- Since 1994, **rates of reported rapes to police have increased to a high of 59%** in 2003 (Planty et al., 2016).
- In 2010, **80% of rape victims received medical treatment** compared to 65% in 1994.
- Studies have confirmed **the presence of advocates result in better outcomes** for both individual victims of sexual violence and the systems they navigate following an assault (Planty et al., 2016).
- A 2010 study demonstrated that an **increase in the availability of legal services is associated with a decrease in intimate partner homicide** (NAESV, n.d.b.).
- Since VAWA's passage, **all states have passed laws making stalking a crime and laws that more effectively address rape** (NAESV, n.d.b.).
- In a systematic review of primary prevention strategies for sexual violence perpetration, CDC researchers found that funding associated with the 1994 U.S. Violence Against Women Act was one of only three strategies to **demonstrate significant effects on preventing sexually violent behavior** in a rigorous outcome evaluation (DeGue et al., 2014).

References

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