



Domestic Violence in the United States

Background information and victim resources

Federal and state law in the United States criminalizes domestic violence and recognizes all victims regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, age, ethnicity, national origin, or immigration or citizenship status.

In 1994, Congress signed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) into law. Among other initiatives, VAWA funds sexual assault and domestic violence programs across the country. VAWA's reauthorization in 2013 demonstrates the U.S. government's continued commitment to helping victims of violence.

In 1996, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, a non-profit organization with U.S. government funding, launched its 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, toll-free service that provides crisis assistance and local shelter referrals for callers across the country. The telephone number is (800) 799-SAFE. The TTY number for the hearing impaired is (800) 787-3224. Trained advocates provide translation services and can connect victims to free state and local resources.

Victims of domestic violence in the United States can access state and local resources that may be administered publicly or privately. More than 10,000 organizations and agencies in the United States provide support and services to victims of crime, including domestic violence, regardless of their immigration status. Services may include counseling, interpretation, safety planning, emergency housing in confidential shelters, and emergency financial assistance.

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, provides grants to all 50 states to be used for combatting violence against women, including domestic violence. They maintain a website that provides links to state-specific domestic violence resources: <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/local-resources>.

Victims may seek court intervention to obtain protection orders, child custody and divorce orders, and child support orders. Prosecutors may also pursue criminal charges against abusers. Within the criminal and civil justice system, local courts can order a range of remedies to promote the safety and welfare of the victim and children, including: parenting classes, alcohol abuse classes, and drug rehabilitation. There can be penalties associated with failure to complete these classes.

For more information, contact the U.S. Department of State, Office of Children's Issues at 888-407-4747 (from the United States and Canada) or + 1 202-501-4444 (from outside the United States).