

# What Cuts to the Victims of Crime Act Could Mean for Sexual and Domestic Violence Survivors in California

Investments in the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) have supported thousands in crisis, and there is a cliff coming. Cuts to VOCA will have devastating impacts on sexual and domestic violence programs and the survivors they support.

According to the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, \$262 million is needed to continue providing essential services to survivors of crime across California. In an emergency, this allows victims to reach a supportive advocate on a hotline, receive counseling to process their trauma, and access housing options so they don't become homeless.



VOCA is California's safety net for survivors of sexual and domestic violence, human trafficking, child abuse, elder abuse, and more. After learning about anticipated federal cuts to this funding stream, the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence and ValorUS® surveyed 89 sexual and domestic violence organizations across the state to learn about potential impacts. Seven culturally specific organizations represented 10% of all the organizations receiving VOCA funding for domestic violence and/or rape crisis services. There are no tribes receiving this funding for domestic violence and/or rape crisis service provision.

**In August 2023, respondents reported that reduced funding would lead to staff layoffs, longer wait times for services, and fewer resources available to survivors, which would:**

- **compromise overall safety – to include increases in psychological issues, further harm, and lethality**
- **further jeopardize already marginalized populations**
- **increase housing instability and homelessness**
- **create a loss of trust and faith**
- **damage community partnerships**

## How Has VOCA Supported Californians?

Adults and youth who received help across the spectrum of victim services in FY 21 and 22:

	<p><b>46,461</b></p> <p>individuals experiencing sexual violence served by Rape Crisis Centers</p> <p><b>42,184</b></p> <p>culturally appropriate victim services for unserved/underserved survivors of crime</p> <p><b>866</b></p> <p>culturally-rooted therapy sessions provided by 9 Tribal programs to Native American children victimized by abuse and/or neglect</p>
	<p><b>354,227</b></p> <p>emergency shelter nights provided to domestic violence survivors and their children</p> <p><b>17,142</b></p> <p>individuals received Domestic Violence Housing First services to support them in securing safe, permanent housing.</p>

2023 Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) Report

Read about our key survey findings below. For more information about the data we collected, please contact Dr. Diane Gout at [diane@cpedv.org](mailto:diane@cpedv.org).

## Loss of Staff and Longer Wait Times for Survivors

Organizations overwhelmingly reported that funding cuts would result in waiting lists.

### Total



### Among Culturally Specific Organizations



Wait lists don't just put survivors in line for services. They translate into a loss of opportunities for them to get help in their own language, with a culturally competent advocate during an emergency. Immigrant survivors who speak languages other than English will face greater risks when they can't access help.

“The courage that it takes to actually ask for help is sometimes all a survivor can muster. If there is no one to answer their calls, it only confirms that they are alone to deal with their trauma.”  
—Central Coast Advocate

## Loss or Significant Reduction to Housing

The majority of organizations reported that funding cuts would result in a loss or significant reduction (more than 50%) in housing services including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and housing first.

In California, 18% of unhoused individuals reported experiencing domestic violence according to the state's [Homeless Data Integration System \(HDIS\) demographic data](#). A loss of housing options would increase the likelihood that a survivor is forced to remain with or return to the person causing them harm—creating dangerous situations where their life is at risk. For those without credit or rental histories because of economic inequality and racial discrimination, they may become homeless while they wait for services.

### Total



### Among Culturally Specific Organizations



“We could not uphold our emergency shelter and transitional housing programs for Asian, Arab, straight and LGBTQ+ survivors of violence with a 30% reduction in VOCA funding. We would have to lay off women and LGBTQ+ women of color workers, and leave other women and LGBTQ+ survivors of violence on the streets.”  
—Bay Area Advocate

## Loss or Significant Reduction to Direct Services

Respondents also said that there would be a loss or significant reduction (more than 50%) in direct services to survivors including counseling and/or support groups.

### Total



### Among Culturally Specific Organizations



[1 in 7 California adults experienced sexual violence between 2021-2022.](#) Most Rape Crisis Centers have less than one full-time therapist on staff, creating long wait times to access counseling services. These cuts would only increase wait times and decrease access for survivors' ability to heal in a trauma-informed setting. [Girls' unaddressed trauma show up as truancy, running away and substance use, and due to racism in the school and policing systems, Black girls will be more likely to get swept into the criminal legal system.](#)

“Waitlists impact immediate safety. Further prolonged states of crisis may lead to someone returning to the abuser, increased mental health issues including suicide, physical health issues, substance abuse, and homelessness. There is a shortage of resources locally so survivors and children will be left unserved.”  
—South Region Advocate

## Loss or Significant Reduction to Financial Assistance to Survivors and/or Their Families

The majority of organizations reported that fewer VOCA funds would result in a loss or significant reduction (more than 50%) of financial assistance to survivors.

Financial abuse is common in domestic violence situations. People harming survivors can spend and/or control a partner’s finances, affect their ability to work (such as causing chronic lateness or harassing them at work), take money they earned, or force them into debt. Without cash assistance for necessities, Black, Indigenous and Survivors of Color—who have been locked out of wealth building because of lower pay—will be left in desperate situations, causing food insecurity, homelessness, an inability to pay for child care, and more.



“ This would have a significant impact on our underserved services. This may include reduction in staff to provide services (including advocacy and therapy) and the financial resources available (including emergency basic needs).  
—North Region Advocate ”

---

## Solution to Gap Funding

With the Crime Victims Fund collecting a record-low amount of funding and Congress’ inaction to supplement it, California is anticipating about a \$100 million allocation – a \$162 million cut to essential services.

The California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, VALOR, Los Angeles LGBT Center, Children’s Advocacy Centers of California, Legal Aid Association of Los Angeles, the LGBTQ Center Long Beach, and the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) call upon Governor Newsom and the legislature to provide \$200 million in ongoing funding in the FY 24 budget to ensure that crime survivors in California have access to the services and supports they need.