

Policy Recommendations

Addressing the Intersections of Domestic Violence, Substance Abuse and Mental Health

May 2023

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICE ACT (FVPSA)

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act forms the backbone of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services response to domestic violence, serving as the only designated federal funding source for domestic violence shelters and services in United States. FVPSA provides core funding for things like crisis services, counseling and short-term housing to more than 1,500 domestic violence shelters and programs and more than 240 Tribes and Native villages. It also supports state-level domestic violence coalitions, prevention programs focused on helping children exposed to violence, culturally-specific organizations, as well as training and technical assistance to help other sectors better meet the needs of survivors. Bipartisan legislation to reauthorize FVPSA was recently introduced in the House, H.R 2604, and is expected to be introduced in the Senate shortly by Senators Casey and Murkowski.

ost urgently, FVPSA funding must grow to reach the enormous demand for services. While FY24 spending will be limited, we ask that domestic violence shelters and services programs receive a modest increase to keep up with increased costs of providing services.

SAFE RECOVERY TOGETEHR DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM (FVPSA)

Under FVPSA, the President's FY24 budget recommended \$27 million for demonstration grants to support families affected by domestic violence who are also facing substance-use coercion, housing instability, and child welfare involvement. This demonstration project will help deliver coordinated services to pregnant and parenting survivors facing these overlapping issues to ensure they are safe, recovering, and able to support and care for their children. Pregnant and parenting survivors of substance-use coercion are also at high risk of child welfare system involvement and separation from their children. In some jurisdictions, policies require such child removal in particular categories of cases, regardless of the child's best interests in that situation.

At a minimum, language should be added to the agency's Appropriation bill to expressly allow FVPSA funds to be used for this initiative at the discretion of the agency. If you have any questions, please contact Sally Schaeffer, policy consultant to National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health, at sally@uncorkedadvocates.com.

VAWA HEALTH

The Violence Against Women Act was reauthorized in 2022 and included a strengthening of provisions to address the intersections of domestic and sexual violence and health. Additions included an increased focus on mental and behavioral health, two-generation approaches that support parents and young children simultaneously, such as home visitation and Head Start, and increasing the availability of sexual assault nurse examiners trained to perform forensic exams. Congress has continued to invest in this program operated out of the Office of Women's Health (OWH) within HHS, however its impacts have been limited to only a few states. We would ask for OWH to allocate \$10 million to allow grants to be distributed to more states.

RISE FROM TRAUMA ACT

When children experience trauma or abuse, they can suffer from a wide range of both short- and long- term health impacts. Left unaddressed, childhood trauma can impact mental and physical well-being, healthy relationships, and academic achievement—and fuel the cycle of violence, addiction, and abuse.

The RISE from Trauma Act, S. 1426 was recently introduced in Senate and will soon be introduced in the House to help children before they harm themselves or others. This bipartisan legislation would fund coordinated programming to increase support for children who have been exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma, including witnessing domestic violence in the home or community violence, child sexual abuse, parental addiction, or maltreatment. It funds community-based and hospital-based efforts to prevent and mitigate the impacts of trauma, and expands training and workforce development to support health care providers, school personnel, social services, first responders, and community leaders. The legislation would authorize the Children Exposed to Violence initiative at DOJ's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and would continue key programs from the SUPPORT Act that support youth mental health and reduce violence and substance abuse. For additional information on how to support this effort, please contact Kiersten Stewart at Futures Without Violence, kstewart@futureswithoutviolence.org, or sign up for updates from the [Child Trauma and ACEs Policy Working Group](#) by contacting Claire Kao at ckao@futureswithoutviolence.org.

These policy recommendations were presented on June 1, 2023 during a policy briefing on mental health and substance-use-related effects of violence hosted by the National Health Collaborative on Violence and Abuse (NHCVA). To learn more about NHCVA and its more than 30 national professional health associations dedicated to reducing and addressing the health consequences of violence, please go to www.nhcva.org.