

VISION. HOPE. SAFETY.

*2014 - 2020 Long Range Plan for a Safe
Wisconsin*

Wisconsin Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Domestic violence touches every community in Wisconsin. We all know someone who has needed help.

In Wisconsin, one in four women is beaten, raped or stalked by a current or former intimate partner at some point in her life. That's 714,000 Wisconsin women, a group of people larger than the combined populations Milwaukee and Green Bay.¹ The proportion of women who have been victimized is twice as large as the percentage of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer at some point in their lives. These statistics make it clear that, whether we realize it or not, we all know someone—probably many people—who have suffered because of domestic violence.

Domestic violence victim services are cost-effective. They are life-saving.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, through the Department of Children and Families (DCF), contribute funding to the domestic violence victim services providers and shelters across our state. Currently, DCF provides funds for victim services to 64 non-profit agencies, 11 tribes and two counties. In Wisconsin, victims and their children in every county and in every tribe have a place they can turn to.



More than nine out of ten victims (91%) know more ways to plan for their safety after working with a Wisconsin domestic violence victim service provider. And, 90% of victims report that they know more about community resources because of the help they received. Research has demonstrated that increasing victims' knowledge of safety planning and community resources leads to their increased safety and well-being over time.

Our goal: to give every victim and every child the ability to live free from abuse.

On a single day in Wisconsin, about 2,100 victims and children receive critical help from victim service providers. However, about 250 requests for assistance go unmet because local agencies don't have the necessary resources.² In addition to being unable to offer any assistance to some victims, service providers and shelters struggle within the confines of austere budgets to meet the complex and significant needs of the victims they are serving. Wisconsin should close these gaps to diminish the high costs of abuse to individuals and communities.

The cultural, ethnic, geographical and racial diversity of our state should be one of its greatest strengths. Wisconsin communities are resilient and already possess the wisdom and potential to foster safe and healthy families. Services for victims and their children are most effective when they tap this potential, when they are by, for, and of the communities they serve. Ensuring that all victims feel comfortable and empowered to seek help for themselves and their children requires our collective commitment.

Overview

This Plan is conducted on a six-year basis to identify recommendations related to funding for domestic violence victim services and to suggest funding and policy priorities to the domestic violence victim advocacy field. The plan was developed by the Wisconsin Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse (Governor's Council), through the Governor's Council's Budget Committee, and by End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (End Abuse). A planning committee representing service providers from across the state was formed. That group sought information and comments from survivors, fellow advocates and community partners from around Wisconsin. In total, approximately 500 survey responses were collected, analyzed and distilled into the recommendations that are contained in the Plan.

Priorities

Through consultation with survivors, advocates and a broad range of community partners, the Governor's Council and End Abuse identified the following priorities for 2014 to 2020. We call on Wisconsin to achieve these goals over the next six years. The Governor's Council and End Abuse will also continue to seek input from survivors, advocates and community partners and update and refine these priorities to ensure that they remain relevant and reflective of victims' needs.

1. Maintain, Strengthen and Expand Core Services

Core services to victims of domestic violence are underfunded in the state of Wisconsin. As a result, even while many victims of domestic violence get life-saving help, every day in our state there are some victims of domestic violence and their children who go without critical assistance. The gap in funding has grave consequences on a daily basis in Wisconsin.

Recommendations:

- Achieve Fair Minimum standards by investing an additional \$19.7 million annually into core services, which include services to culturally-specific populations.
- Expand Core services to better address the most common barriers to independence and safety for victims and their children, particularly to support programs that provide services for affordable housing, economic empowerment and the mental health effects of trauma.
- Continue to invest in services to underserved populations and culturally-specific programs so that every Wisconsinite who may be a victim of domestic violence feels comfortable seeking services that are relevant to her or his experiences.

2. Enhance Services and Prevention Education for Children and Youth

Wisconsin children and youth hold the potential of a violence-free future. We can unlock this potential by investing in promising prevention programming for children and youth. We must also ensure that the children most at risk to be affected by domestic violence in adulthood, namely those young people who are exposed to domestic violence during childhood, have the services they need to overcome these challenges and thrive.

Recommendations:

- Pass legislation to promote teen dating violence prevention education and policies in Wisconsin schools and to maximize teens' options for seeking help and receiving the support they need.
- Dedicate funding to promote dating teen violence services and prevention activities in Wisconsin.
- Increase Wisconsin's support for children exposed to domestic violence by creating sustainable funding for children's services.

3. Strengthen Outreach and Education to Wisconsin Communities

Research indicates that only four percent of domestic violence homicide victims sought services from victim advocates.³ This statistic reveals that services are effective, but it also demonstrates that many victims who are in life and death situations remain in the shadows—isolated from safety and support. Indeed, in domestic violence cases, the most difficult time for a victim to reach out for help is often when help is needed the most.

We call for increased resources to allow domestic violence victim service providers and community-based organizations to educate communities and foster increased public awareness about domestic violence and the services available to victims. These initiatives will connect victims with the help they need. A greater ability to engage communities will also lay the foundation for social change, which is essential to making Wisconsin a safer place for victims, survivors, children and future generations.

Recommendations:

- Support domestic violence victim service providers to be organizers and leaders in community-wide efforts to raise awareness and promote prevention activities.
- Fund opportunities for statewide and local public awareness campaigns that involve a diverse range of leaders and stakeholders.

4. Expand Programming that is Community Driven in Culturally-Specific and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities

The diversity of our state is a strength. Providing meaningful and effective services for every victim necessitates that every community have a role in shaping and offering services that are relevant to its members. In addition to continuing to invest in core services that are geared to culturally-specific and underserved populations, Wisconsin should expand support for community-driven services for victims from culturally-specific groups, from underserved populations and who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender individuals.

Recommendation:

- Support community-driven services for culturally-specific and underrepresented populations, including LGBT communities, throughout Wisconsin. These services should be by, for, and of communities they serve.

5. Address the Civil Legal Needs of Domestic Violence Victims and their Children

In Wisconsin, we fall dreadfully short in protecting victims and their children because Wisconsin provides no funding for civil legal services for victims of domestic violence, whereas at least 46 other states fund civil legal services for indigent clients.⁴ The outcomes of civil legal cases, including restraining order cases and child custody and placement actions, have life and death consequences for victims and their children. To protect the safety and wellbeing of victims and children, we must give them a fair shot at justice in civil court.

Recommendation:

- Invest in justice for domestic violence victims and their children by funding civil legal services at a rate - at the very least - comparable with other Midwestern states.

6. Focus on Promising Strategies and Practices

Domestic violence homicides are preventable homicides. In the last several years, a number of advocates, law enforcement officers and other partners have initiated promising practices that utilize our knowledge of homicide risk factors to create enhanced safety for victims who are most likely to be killed. We should invest in initiatives that harness the life-saving potential of risk assessment, outreach to victims, and enhanced collaboration between advocates, law enforcement and other service providers.

Recommendation:

- Incubate collaborative strategies that harness risk assessment, enhanced coordination and intensive services to prevent domestic violence homicides.

CONSEQUENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

What do 714,000 Wisconsin women have in common?

- 714,000 Wisconsin women have been physically abused, sexually assaulted or stalked by an intimate partner.⁵
- Most of this violence was significant. Almost half a million of these women were fearful and concerned for their safety, and one-quarter of a million Wisconsin women were injured and needed medical care as a result of the abuse.⁶
- Each year, about 30,000 domestic abuse incidents come to the attention of local Wisconsin law enforcement agencies.⁷ This is an extraordinary number, especially considering that most incidents are never reported.

What does virtually every county in Wisconsin have in common?

- 69 of Wisconsin's 72 counties have experienced a domestic violence homicide since 2000.
- In that time, 499 Wisconsinites have lost their lives in domestic violence homicides.⁸
- 96% of counties, which represent 99.2% of the state's population, have had at least one domestic violence homicide since 2000.



What are the consequences?

Domestic violence takes a heavy toll on Wisconsin. The loss of dozens of lives in Wisconsin each year is the most visible and perhaps most profound impact. Yet, domestic abuse's mark on our state runs deeper than the immediate consequences of violence. Abuse happening in Wisconsin today will affect our communities in many ways, from our economy to the health and education of our children over the long-term.

Investments we make now to prevent the ongoing costs and consequences of unchecked abuse will pay off now and into the next generation.

Long-Term Health

The health consequences of abuse last well after the immediate physical wounds heal. Addressing and preventing abuse saves long-term health care costs to individuals, businesses and taxpayers.

- Abused women report poorer long-term health than women who have not been abused.⁹
- They also require use of health care resources at much higher rates, particularly for chronic conditions such as pelvic pain and central nervous system disorders, which are linked to ongoing abuse.¹⁰
- Studies show that victims' children also require more medical attention than their similarly situated peers.¹¹

Child Welfare

Supporting victims' efforts to protect themselves and their children will improve the physical safety of Wisconsin children and promote their healthy development.

- When children live in violent homes, they are at higher risk for child abuse.¹²
- Data suggests that about 30% of children who witness domestic violence are themselves physically abused.¹³
- Later in adult life, children who witness violence, are abused or have other adverse child experiences are more likely to have physical and mental health problems, engage in high-risk behaviors, have a lower quality of life and are more likely to lack health care or be enrolled in Medicaid programs.¹⁴

Economy

It may not seem obvious, but supporting victims will strengthen Wisconsin's economy.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate every physical domestic assault perpetrated against a woman results in an average of 7.2 days of missed work.¹⁵
- The CDC also estimates the annual cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence is \$1.17 billion nationally (inflation adjusted), with more than 7.9 million paid workdays - the equivalent of more than 32,000 full time jobs - lost each year.¹⁶
- Using the best available evidence, it is estimated that Wisconsin domestic abuse service providers prevent about 85,000 missed days of work a year. That's about 340 years of productivity gained in one year.

Education

Supporting local domestic violence victim services will have a positive impact on Wisconsin youths' ability to learn, grow and be productive.

- Many youth who are exposed to domestic violence, either between adult family members or in their own dating relationships, are negatively impacted in their social and educational development.
- Exposure to violence can have profound effects on young people's adjustment to school and their ability to concentrate and learn.
- Similarly, teen victims of dating violence are more likely to do poorly in school and face other consequences, such as drug and alcohol abuse.

Homelessness

Giving victims and their children options to live safely and free from abusers will help reduce homelessness in Wisconsin.

- Domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness, especially among women.¹⁷
- Studies from our neighboring states indicate that about one-third of homeless women become homeless because of domestic abuse.¹⁸

What can we do about domestic violence in Wisconsin?

Every county and every tribe in Wisconsin has a program to serve victims of domestic violence and their children. Local domestic violence victim service providers are the critical resource in every community's response to domestic abuse. By supporting these agencies, we are supporting Wisconsin victims' ability to live free from violence. Opening doors to safety and freedom for victims and their children strengthens our communities and our state.

SERVICES FOR VICTIMS

Life-Saving Assistance for 38,000 Wisconsinites

In the last annual reporting period, Wisconsin domestic violence victim service providers served over 38,000 individuals. That is a staggering number. The individuals served would fill the BMO Harris Bradley Center in Milwaukee and Kohl Center in Madison, and a couple of thousand people would not have seats. Wisconsin has 42 domestic violence shelters that provide about 200,000 nights of shelter to victims and their children annually. Although the communal living arrangements at domestic violence shelters don't match most people's ideal living situation, when you don't feel safe in your home, the security and refuge of shelter can be the first step to healing and building a new, violence-free life. Close to 7,500 Wisconsinites received safe shelter in the last reporting period, approximately half of whom were children. However, close to 3,000 requests for shelter from adults could not be answered because the local agency lacked capacity or resources. This number does not account for the many children who would have accompanied these victims had they been able to receive shelter.

Domestic violence victim service providers lead to safer futures.

A victim's decision to seek services is often the critical point in his or her journey to safety. Service providers offer the shelter, resources and information that research and first-hand experience have shown to be effective at preventing repeat abuse.

In addition to working with individuals, domestic violence victim advocates work with other local officials, agencies and institutions to promote policies and practices that address and prevent domestic violence. There are over 65 community coordinated response teams (CCRs) in Wisconsin. CCRs are multi-disciplinary task-forces that involve law enforcement, court officials, human service agencies, housing providers, batterers' treatment providers, faith leaders, businesses and other community leaders to promote a community-wide approach to increase victim safety and ensure offender accountability. Domestic violence victim service providers most often play a lead role in convening and propelling CCRs to carry out their important work.

Investment in victim services not only saves lives - it saves money.

The financial consequences of abuse are considerable. Individuals and business feel the impact in terms of health care costs, lost productivity and opportunity costs. The state and local governments see the costs in the budgets of law enforcement, the courts, Medicaid and human service agencies. When we make a small investment to lend victims and their children a helping hand, that investment yields enormous dividends in human and financial returns. Economic analysis shows that for every dollar invested in victim services, \$9.25 is saved in property losses, healthcare expenses, police response, lost productivity and other costs.¹⁹ Closing the funding gaps for the services available to domestic violence victims isn't just the right thing to do; it's the fiscally sensible thing to do.

Funding domestic violence victim services is a public-private partnership.

Individual citizens and communities believe in services for victims of domestic violence. They show that by investing in these services. And, domestic violence service agencies have worked hard to build community support for their missions. A recent analysis of revenue from a large and representative sample of Wisconsin domestic violence agencies found that approximately 50% of investments in their services come from non-governmental sources. Relative to comparable non-profit agencies in their sector, domestic violence service providers have leveraged private dollars at significantly higher rates.



50

About half of all funding for domestic violence victim service providers comes from non-governmental sources, a rate significantly higher than other comparable service providers.

In Wisconsin, private individuals have done their part by contributing about half of the investment in victim services. Wisconsin domestic abuse agencies have done their part by working tirelessly to build this support. The State must continue to hold up its end of partnership by continuing to invest so that every victim and every child in Wisconsin has the ability to live free from abuse.

THE PLAN

Overview

The people of the state of Wisconsin, through the Department of Children and Families (DCF), contribute funding to the domestic violence victim services providers and shelters across our state. Currently, DCF provides funds for victim services to 64 non-profit agencies, 11 tribes and 2 counties. In Wisconsin, victims and their children in every county and in every tribe have a place they can turn to.

This Plan is conducted on a six-year basis to identify recommendations related to funding for domestic violence victim services and to suggest funding and policy priorities to the domestic violence victim advocacy field. The plan was developed by the Wisconsin Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse (Governor's Council), through the Council's Budget Committee, and by End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (End Abuse). A planning committee representing service providers from across the state was formed. That group sought information and comments from survivors, fellow advocates and community partners from around Wisconsin. In total, approximately 500 survey responses were collected, analyzed and distilled into the recommendations that are contained in the Plan

Priorities

Through consultation with survivors, advocates and a broad range of community partners, the Governor's Council and End Abuse identified the following priorities for 2014 to 2020. We call on Wisconsin to achieve these goals over the next six years. The Governor's Council and End Abuse will also continue to seek input from survivors, advocates and community partners and update and refine these priorities to ensure that they remain relevant and reflective of victims' needs.

1. Maintain, Strengthen and Expand Core Services
2. Enhance Services and Prevention Education for Children and Youth
3. Strengthen Outreach and Education to Wisconsin Communities
4. Expand Programming that is Community Driven in Culturally-Specific and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities
5. Address Civil Legal Needs of Domestic Violence Victims and their Children
6. Focus on Promising Strategies and Practices

1. Maintain, Strengthen and Expand Core Services

Currently, there are several grant programs administered by DCF that fund victim services in Wisconsin. The grant programs are:

- **Basic services** - grants that fund operational and basic expenses at domestic violence victim shelters and programs.
- **Support services** - smaller grants that allow service providers to add specific programming to their service offerings.
- **Services for children** - funds that support counseling, programming and advocacy specifically for children.
- **Services for individuals who are members of underserved populations** - funding for culturally- and linguistically-specific services that meet the unique needs of communities that for reasons of racial or other discrimination and oppression have faced specific and unique barriers when accessing services.
- **Refugee Family Strengthening Program** - support for culturally- and linguistically-specific services to refugee populations in the state of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin law mandates seven services that all state-funded shelters must provide. DCF also requires that non-residential programs provide the first four of these services.

- **A 24-hour, seven-day-a-week crisis helpline, staffed by skilled and trained personnel** - helpline staff responds to victims and their children in immediate crisis; provide information on safety, options and resources; and respond to the questions and concerns of family members, professionals, and the general public.
- **Counseling and advocacy** - programs provide a peer model of individual counseling, focusing on safety planning, exploring options, empowerment, and education. Regularly scheduled support groups are also offered for victims and children.
- **Information, referral and follow-up** - programs are able to connect victims and their children to a myriad of community resources. Programs also strive to stay connected to a victim after she or he leaves shelter or services, to offer on-going information and support.
- **Community education** - programs must ensure that the community is well aware of the availability and type of services offered. In addition, programs spend many hours educating the general public and professionals about the dynamics and impact of domestic abuse.
- **Emergency shelter, temporary housing and food** - shelter programs must provide a safe and welcoming environment, with staffing around the clock. Nutritious meals, familiar to a resident's cultural group, are also provided. The average stay is about 27 days, and has been slowly increasing. However, stays of 60 days or longer are becoming increasingly common.
- **Emergency transportation** - programs provide assistance to families to obtain transportation to safe shelter, either with program resources or through an arrangement with law enforcement. In addition, programs often help a victim with transportation to a

job, appointment, or court appearance or assist in arranging school transportation for the children.

- **Arrangements for the education of school-age children** - shelter staff assist with arrangements for school-age children residing in shelter to remain safe in their home school district, or when that is not possible, to enroll in another school system. All arrangements are made within 72 hours of a child arriving in shelter.

All of the services funded by the five DCF grant programs are core services in Wisconsin's response to domestic violence victims - all are essential. Without services specifically designed for children, we might be able to attend to some of the immediate consequences of abuse that adults face, but we would be leaving vulnerable children unsupported, destined to carry the trauma and pain of abuse forward into the next generation. Without services specifically designed for underserved and refugee populations, we would be ignoring the unique challenges and issues that many victims in our diverse state encounter.

Therefore, future funding decisions and priorities should take account of each and all of these grant programs.

The State of Core Services

Core services to victims of domestic violence are underfunded in the state of Wisconsin. As a result, even while many victims of domestic violence get lifesaving help, every day in our state some victims of domestic violence and their children go without critical assistance. The gap in funding has grave consequences on a daily basis in Wisconsin.

The National Domestic Violence Census is an attempt to measure, on a given day each year, the state of domestic violence victim services across the county. Every Wisconsin domestic violence victim service provider participated in the 2013 Census on September 17 of that year. On that day, 2,072 victims and their children received lifesaving help, but 247 victims and children who were asking for help, did not get the assistance they needed because programs lacked funding and capacity.²⁰ Taking the Census as representative of a single day in Wisconsin, we estimate that close 100,000 requests for help from victims are not met on an annual basis in Wisconsin because services are not adequately funded.

The funding gap is also evident in the number of victims turned away from shelter annually. Approximately 45% requests for shelter are not fulfilled because the shelter is full. More specifically, in the 2013 annual reporting period, 3,736 adult victims were sheltered in Wisconsin, but close to 3,000 requests for shelter were not able to be fulfilled, forcing victims to either remain with abusers, to become homeless or to enter into other desperate housing situations.



7,446

Victims &
Children
Sheltered



198,357

Shelter Nights

2,999

Requests for
shelter denied
because at
capacity

“On our waiting list is a mother with two small children. She was physically, emotionally, and sexually abused by her ex, who is now stalking and threatening her. Currently, she is living with a friend, but it’s not a permanent solution because her friend might lose the apartment if the landlord finds that there are too many people living there. The individuals and families that seek shelter are often fleeing from severe violence and threats, and need immediate emergency shelter and other services.”

The Wisconsin Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse's Fair Minimum Budget (Appendix A) helps quantify the extent to which services for victims are underfunded. The Governor's Council developed the Fair Minimum Budget as a tool to gauge a fair and reasonable agency budget for an organization providing the statutorily required core services to victims of domestic abuse, services to children and services to meet the needs of underserved populations. In Wisconsin, only eight local agencies have the resources to meet the Fair Minimum. Wisconsin will need an additional \$19.7 million annual investment to meet the Fair Minimum standard.

Numbers and statistics do not show the other ways in which a lack of adequate resources prevents Wisconsin from meeting the needs of victims and creating a safer state. Funding shortfalls prevent victims from receiving a comprehensive set of services that can help them rebuild their lives and remain financially and emotionally independent of abusers.

Respondents to the planning surveys were near universal in describing a few key and persistent barriers to victims' safety that are not being adequately addressed.

Affordable Housing and Economic Equity

Survivors, advocates and community partners say the lack of affordable and stable housing keeps victims trapped in abusive situations and partially explains overflows in Wisconsin domestic violence shelters. A domestic violence victim in Wisconsin who earns minimum wage needs to work 81 hours a week to afford a two bedroom

81

Making minimum wage, a domestic violence survivor has to work 81 hours a week to afford the average two-bedroom apartment in Wisconsin.

apartment for herself and her children at the market rate.²¹ Many victims are not able to find higher paying employment when leaving abusive relationships because of their victimization. Abusive partners often sabotage victims' educational and employment opportunities as a way to keep victims isolated and dependent. And even if a victim is able to do a bit better and earn a higher wage, housing may still not be affordable. The average wage for a renter in Wisconsin is \$11.42 an hour. A victim earning this wage would need to work 52 hours a week to afford a 2 bedroom apartment at the fair market average price in our state.²²

In addition to trapping victims in abusive homes, the lack of stable and affordable access to housing has serious consequences for victims who do leave. Research shows that housing instability can magnify the emotional and physical impacts of trauma for victims. Abused women's housing difficulties, such as moving frequently or facing an eviction, are associated with a greater likelihood that she will suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, decreased productivity and higher need for medical attention.²³

The lack of affordable housing for victims and their children is a complicated problem that requires a multifaceted solution. The problem must be addressed by policies that promote economic equity, opportunity and that increase quality affordable housing stock in Wisconsin.

Domestic violence victim service providers should also have the resources to play a direct role in creating more opportunities for victims to find affordable housing.

Service providers need more capacity to work with victims to address underlying barriers to achieving their full potential. Victims must be safe and heal from the immediate effects of physical and emotional trauma before they can realize higher earning potential. Some victims, especially those who have been subject to financial exploitation and abuse, need extra help with finances. Wisconsin domestic violence victim service providers incorporate financial empowerment and literacy services into their offerings. A few agencies have specific programs that focus on job-readiness and training. One program offers a matched savings program. However, many service providers have limited opportunities to expand to meet the need in this area because they are struggling just to maintain crisis response services.

In addition, Wisconsin should look to expand the transitional and affordable housing options for victims of domestic violence. Transitional housing programs that combine longer-term housing stability with service delivery have an important role to play in Wisconsin's response to domestic violence. A victim who experiences housing instability soon after leaving a domestic violence shelter is more vulnerable to return to the abuser or experience another abusive relationship. Transitional and affordable housing programs address this problem and have transformed the lives of survivors and their children.

Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Dependency

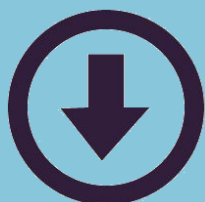
Lifetime exposure to trauma has an adverse effect on victims' mental health and wellness. Domestic violence victimization leads to a significantly higher risk of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide attempts and drug abuse. Giving victims the opportunities to live healthy, violence-free lives requires that service providers offer both crisis response and services to address the impact that abuse has had on victims' mental health. Wisconsin victim service providers have embraced holistic, trauma-informed service delivery models that account for various ways trauma affects victims.

However, as a general matter, service providers have not been able to offer victims access to services to meet the full set of victims' needs. Survivors, advocates and community partners who responded to the planning survey noted that domestic violence victim service providers do not have the resources to address longer-term mental health and substance abuse issues because providers are struggling to meet the immediate crisis needs of other victims.

Services for All Communities and All People

As noted, core services to domestic violence victims in Wisconsin necessarily include services that are specific to the diverse populations of our state. Survivors and advocates noted what is confirmed by research literature: victims are more likely to reach out for help from organizations that understand their culture, language and background. In addition, effective advocacy requires the ability to understand how a victim's culture affects her or his sense of identity, notions of family, and values. Therefore, funding for domestic violence victim services in Wisconsin must include support for culturally-specific services, so that services in Wisconsin are relevant and effective for every victim and every child.

Advocates and victims described a two-fold challenge: increasing the capacity of every domestic violence service provider to offer culturally- and linguistically-informed services to every victim who walks through the door, and to increase funding for services that are created and driven by culturally-specific groups in our state.



Wisconsin ranks last for well-being of African-American children. This crisis reveals our state's racially uneven playing field and is indicative of the even steeper battle that many adults and children in Wisconsin face when dealing with domestic abuse.

In Wisconsin, the need to empower marginalized communities is especially acute. Wisconsin often ranks at or near the top of racial disparity indicators. For example, a 2014 study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children*, found that Wisconsin is last in the nation for wellbeing of African American children.²⁴ Racial disparities for other nonwhite groups, though not as severe, are also unacceptably high.

While these facts may not seem to have a direct relationship to domestic violence victim services, they reveal that generations of racism still ravage Wisconsin communities. These lasting effects drastically limit the opportunities that people of color in Wisconsin who are victims of domestic violence have for safety and health. In addition, years spent struggling against the gravity of our state's racially uneven playing field amplify the trauma many domestic abuse victims in Wisconsin experience. Although the moral imperative to eliminate racial disparities in our state is a much larger project, investment in culturally relevant and specific services for families experiencing domestic violence is a necessary step toward that goal.

Feedback from survivors, advocates and community partners indicated that other groups of Wisconsinites have difficulty accessing services. Older victims, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) victims, and teens were identified as particularly underserved in Wisconsin. Older victims face unique barriers when accessing services. They are more likely to be isolated and less likely to know that services are available for them. Older adults who are victims may have particular vulnerabilities and needs that require specialized training and attention. As the population of our state ages, it will become even more critical that domestic abuse programs are supported to develop capacity to serve this population. Services to teens and LGBT victims are addressed in greater detail elsewhere in the Plan.

Recommendations:

- **Achieve Fair Minimum standards by investing \$19.7 million annually into core services, which include services culturally-specific populations.**
- **Expand Core services to better address the most common barriers to independence and safety for victims and their children, particularly to support programs that provide services for affordable housing, economic empowerment and the mental health effects of trauma.**
- **Continue to invest in services to underserved populations and culturally-specific programs so that every Wisconsinite who may be a victim of domestic violence feels comfortable seeking services that are relevant to her or his experiences.**

2. Enhance Services and Prevention Education for Children and Youth

Invest in eliminating the root causes.

Domestic violence victim advocates often describe their struggle to balance prevention efforts with the need to intervene in crisis situations in terms of an allegory of people drowning in a river. The allegory is this: domestic violence victim advocates approach a river in which many, many people are drowning in a swiftly moving current. Naturally, the advocates work to pull out as many people from the river before they are swept away. As they pull more and more people out, the advocates wonder what would cause so many to be fighting for their lives in the current. If only they could go upstream, to the source of the problem, to investigate and prevent whatever it is that is causing the drowning victims to be trapped in the first place. However, the advocates' dilemma is that moving upstream would necessarily mean they will be unable to keep pulling people out of the river, leaving drowning victims to fend for themselves and likely leading to their deaths.

With inadequate funding for core services and little to no funding for prevention efforts, domestic violence victim service providers find themselves in a position that is analogous to the river allegory. Service providers feel a moral obligation to pull as many victims out of the river—to address the life and death crises of as many victims who come to their doors as they possibly can. They also feel the need to work to prevent the beliefs and behaviors that cause domestic violence in the first place. Yet, because there simply aren't enough resources to accomplish both tasks, preventing potential future domestic violence could come at the expense of giving life-saving help to a current victim.

We must resolve this untenable dilemma in Wisconsin to create a safer state, now and in the future, by dedicating funding to prevention, while we also ensure adequate funding for core services to current victims.

Wisconsin youth hold the promise of a more peaceful state.

Nationally, research into prevention education for youth around dating violence and healthy relationships is developing rapidly. Several evidence-based curricula have been tested, and researchers and educators continue to gain insight into promising and effective practices.²⁵ These are exciting advancements that give promise to the possibility of preventing domestic violence before it ever occurs. Indeed, promoting values of mutual respect and shifting attitudes in the next generation are the only ways we will ever eliminate domestic violence in Wisconsin.

10

In one year, 10.3% of WI high school girls have experienced physical violence in a dating relationship situation.

16

15.7% have experienced sexual violence in a dating relationship.

These girls are at high-risk for continued abuse into adulthood.

Wisconsin must undertake a concerted effort to promote prevention education. In the last annual reporting period, domestic violence victim service providers offered 3,071 presentations

for 87,593 young people in Wisconsin. Given the extreme lack of funding for this work and the competing demands for crisis intervention services, these totals are impressive; however, they represent only a sliver of the state's population. Less than seven percent of the state's youth saw an education session from service provider.

Prevention educators at domestic violence victim service providers report that their ability to reach more students is seriously hampered by both a lack of funding and limited support from Wisconsin schools. While domestic violence victim service providers are generally recognized as the leaders in their communities on domestic violence issues, many schools do not see education for teen dating violence and prevention as enough of a priority to devote the necessary time and attention. Moreover, a specific funding stream to promote and to implement dating violence prevention simply does not exist, leaving most programs struggling to support this promising activity at its current minimal level.

In addition, domestic violence victim service providers are more and more commonly working to support and guide current victims of teen dating violence to safety. Advocacy with teens requires special skills and training. It also presents complications as advocates negotiate the unique challenges that arise because teen victims do not have all of the rights and options that adult victims do. Laws and policies that govern service provision to teens should seek to maximize their options for seeking help and receiving the support they need.

Every child deserves a violence-free adulthood, especially those who grow up in abusive homes.

Another important aspect to preventing domestic violence in the next generation requires that Wisconsin appropriately care for those children who are most at risk to become victims or perpetrators in adulthood: namely, children who are exposed to domestic violence in their families as they grow. Currently, DCF provides funding for services for children of domestic violence victims. This funding is approximately \$1.1 million. This amount is only sufficient to provide grants of \$20,000 per year to domestic violence agencies. Service providers work hard to supplement this funding with other resources; however, given the limited grant amounts, many programs cannot afford to retain a full-time staff person to work as a children's advocate. Moreover, working with children who have been exposed to domestic violence requires specialized skills and knowledge, to understand children's developmental needs and to provide effective trauma-informed care to these children. With such limited support from the state, domestic violence victim programs struggle to attract and retain qualified staff to help children exposed to domestic violence heal and thrive.

Recommendations:

- **Pass legislation to promote teen dating violence prevention education and policies in Wisconsin schools and to maximize teens' options for seeking help and receiving the support they need.**
- **Dedicate funding to promote teen dating violence services and prevention activities in Wisconsin.**
- **Increase Wisconsin's support for children exposed to domestic violence by creating sustainable funding for children's services.**

3. Strengthen Outreach and Education to Wisconsin Communities

Increased resources are needed to allow domestic violence victim service providers and community-based organizations to educate communities and foster increased public awareness about domestic violence and the services available to victims. In the last reporting period, victim service providers were able to hold 1,811 community education presentations, reaching 129,091 Wisconsinites. While that is a lot of people, we still have to reach the other 98% of the state. Community engagement efforts should incorporate strategies to shift the attitudes and beliefs that cause violence. Once communities are thinking about domestic violence, they can be part of the solution to end it.

Often the most difficult time for a victim to reach out for help is when help is needed the most.

Although statistics vary, most domestic violence victims do not come forward to seek help from victim service providers.²⁶ For example, a large study in Chicago found that only 18% of domestic violence victims sought help from a domestic violence agency. Victims do not come forward for help for a variety of complex reasons: fear, isolation and hopelessness; a lack of knowledge about resources in their communities; or, a sense that there are not services available that relevant to their cultural background, racial, ethnic or gender identity or sexual orientation.

To reach current victims and prevent our children, friends and family from becoming future victims, we must empower communities to change.

Domestic violence is not the problem of the domestic violence victim advocates. It's not a problem that belongs to the police or to the courts. It's the problem of our entire state. It's a problem for anyone who wants his or her daughter, son or other loved one to be able to grow up to be always safe in his or her home.

Reaching every victim and every child requires that every person in Wisconsin live in a community that is knowledgeable about domestic violence and the help available for victims. When we promote community engagement, not only do we break the silence that allows abuse to continue; we plant the seeds of long-lasting social change by fostering values of equality, human dignity and mutual respect.

Recommendations:

- **Support domestic violence victim service providers to be organizers and leaders in community-wide efforts to raise awareness and promote prevention activities.**
- **Fund opportunities for statewide and local public awareness campaigns that involve a diverse range of leaders and stakeholders.**

4. Expand Programming that is Community Driven in Culturally-specific and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities

Every Wisconsin community should be able to draw upon the power of its cultures and identities to address domestic violence.

The diversity of our state is a strength. Providing meaningful and effective services for every victim necessitates that every community have a role in shaping and offering services that are relevant to its members. In addition to continuing to invest in core services that are geared to culturally-specific and underserved populations, Wisconsin should expand support for community-driven services for victims from culturally-specific groups, from underserved populations and who are Lesbian, Gay Bisexual or Transgender individuals.

The diverse communities of our state are resilient, possessing the wisdom and potential to foster safe and healthy families. Services for victims and their children are most effective when they tap this potential, when they are by, for, and of the communities they serve. Survivors feel most comfortable coming forward to get help when they share common values, experiences, native tongues and traditions with the advocates they confide in. And, advocacy for victims is stronger when it organizes and leads a community's response to domestic violence from within.

In Wisconsin, we have a solid tradition of fostering services by, for and of culturally-specific and underserved groups. We need to build on this foundation and expand community-driven services to culturally-specific and underserved populations along several dimensions.

Every Wisconsinite—regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity—should be free from the fear of domestic abuse.

A DCF grant currently supports *Diverse and Resilient*, a statewide organization that provides training, support and educational materials on effective services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (LGBT) Populations or victim service providers. The organization also trains community health promoters to distribute information on safe and healthy relationships to LGBT people statewide. DCF also supports the *Milwaukee LGBT Community Center* to provide crisis counselling, safety planning, advocacy,

The Latina Resource Center, a project of United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS) in Milwaukee, provides onsite comprehensive bilingual, bicultural services to Latina victims of domestic violence and their families. The organization's goal is to promote and enhance the safety, dignity, and independence of Latina women through the collaborative provision of community services, support groups, counseling and other resources.

The Refugee Family Strengthening Program (RFSP) has been in existence since 1994. The Project provides culturally- and linguistically-competent services to Southeast Asian and Russian-speaking refugees and immigrants at fifteen sites throughout the State of Wisconsin. The RFSP provides a variety of services, including crisis intervention, safety planning, advocacy, accompaniment, education, and leadership development for survivors. All services emphasize safety, healing, empowerment and resilience. In addition, advocates provide education in the community on the dynamics of domestic abuse and needs of survivors from their respective communities. A statewide bilingual (Hmong-English) hotline links victims, families, and service providers with skilled, trained staff.

Tribal Domestic Abuse Programs - The Lac du Flambeau Statewide Shelter provides safe shelter and supportive services specifically designed to meet the needs of Native American women from all eleven tribes in the state. The program goals are: 1) to educate the

community about domestic violence and sexual assault in order to reduce violence against women in Native American communities; 2) to promote physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional well-being; and 3) to encourage cultural and spiritual awareness by incorporating Native American traditional values, beliefs and attitudes into programming. Services provided include a 24-hour crisis line, individual counseling, support groups, legal and other advocacy, transportation to the shelter, community education, and transitional living. In addition, all tribes in Wisconsin receive funding through the DCF Tribal Family Services Program to provide core domestic abuse services.

Since 1989, **Asha Family Services** has been providing culturally-specific domestic violence services to the African-American population in Milwaukee. Staff provide intensive case management and advocacy services for victims to access a variety of community supports and services. Asha Family Services also fulfills a unique need in the state by providing services to women who are incarcerated or recently released from the criminal justice system. Not only are many victims of domestic violence, but they must also recover from the impact of incarceration and readjust to society. Asha provides these women with support groups, case management, education, and systems advocacy.

Deaf Unity - Founded in 2005, Deaf Unity provides culturally and linguistically-competent domestic abuse services in the deaf community. Paid and volunteer deaf advocates educate the deaf community on the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual assault and work collaboratively with mainstream domestic abuse programs to provide co-advocacy to deaf victims of abuse.

and case management for LGBT survivors of violence in the greater Milwaukee area.

As discussed in another section, survivors, advocates and community partners identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender victims as particularly underserved. Survey respondents likely identified an acute need for LGBT-specific services because of the compounding effects of the ignorance and stigma surrounding domestic violence in LGBT relationships with the lack of services that are attuned to LGBT victims' unique challenges and needs.

While statistics vary slightly, domestic abuse in LGBT relationships occurs at roughly the same rates as it does in heterosexual relationships, despite commonly held beliefs to the contrary. A 2010 study found that 29% of Wisconsin LBT women have been hit, slapped, or kicked by their partners in their lifetimes.²⁷ Even more, 77% of LBT women said they knew someone who experienced abuse in an LGBT relationship and they were uncomfortable offering help to that person.

Barriers to help-seeking for LGBT victims include: fear of being outed; a lack of support among family or friends; fear of being socially isolated in relatively small, tightly-knit circles of friends and peers; and relatively fewer service agencies that are capable of helping victims address these complex sets of challenges. Some of these obstacles can be especially high in Wisconsin's rural communities, but they exist across our entire state.

Recommendation:

- **Support community-driven services for culturally-specific and underrepresented populations, including services to LGBT communities throughout Wisconsin. These services should be by, for, and of communities they serve.**

5. Address the Civil Legal Needs of Domestic Violence Victims and their Children

Imagine being raped, stalked or beaten by a former intimate partner. Now imagine a court ordering you to have ongoing contact with your attacker.

That's what is at stake in civil child custody and placement cases involving domestic violence. Perhaps even more importantly, these court decisions have enormous consequences for the emotional and physical wellbeing of children. And in Wisconsin, most victims participate in these court proceedings without the help of an attorney. That means they are forced to face their attackers in court—with their safety and the safety of their children on the line—without the kind of assistance most of us would expect to have in a property dispute or personal injury case.

Without legal representation, victims are not able to assert their rights and utilize current statutory protections for victims and children. When victims face abusers alone in civil court, they are at an inherent disadvantage and just and safe outcomes are unlikely.

In Wisconsin, we fall dreadfully short in protecting victims and their children because Wisconsin provides no funding for civil legal services for victims of domestic violence, whereas at least 46 other states fund civil legal services for indigent clients. Our neighboring states, on average, spend approximately \$7.6 million a year on civil legal services for litigants who are unable to afford an attorney.²⁸

It's hard to overstate the extent to which a lack of civil legal representation disrupts our entire state's response to domestic violence. The criminal justice system devotes millions of dollars to enforcing no-contact provisions, prosecuting, supervising and incarcerating offenders. Victim service providers work tirelessly to safety plan with victims, to offer crisis response and to help them heal from the physical and emotional wounds. But, when victims have children in common with offenders and when they don't have representation to protect them or the children in family court, often the legal system puts victims and children right back into harm's way. In *pro se* cases, many judges, commissioners and guardians *ad litem* have a tendency to push the disputing parties toward an "agreement." Most *pro se* victims don't have the knowledge or ability to forgo agreeing to their perpetrators' terms and citing the laws that require courts to account for their safety and the safety of their children.

As a state, we should invest in protecting victims and their children by ensuring they have adequate representation in cases that have enormous consequences for their safety and futures.

Recommendation:

- Invest in justice for domestic violence victims and their children by funding civil legal services at a rate—at the very least—comparable with other Midwestern states.

6. Focus on Promising Strategies and Practices

Law enforcement officials often say that the predictable is preventable. As our understanding of the factors that put victims of domestic violence at risk to be killed continues to grow, domestic violence homicides are becoming more predictable, and, hence, the potential to prevent these tragedies continues to increase. In the last several years, a number of advocates, law enforcement officers and other partners have initiated promising practices that utilize our knowledge of homicide risk factors to create enhanced safety for victims who are most likely to be killed.

The Maryland Lethality Assessment Program has developed a risk assessment and referral protocol for victims that is informed by three critical facts. First, only 4% of domestic violence homicide victims nationally ever used domestic violence victim services. Second, in contrast, in 50% of domestic violence homicides, law enforcement officers previously had contact with the victims, and, third, when victims go to shelter, their risk of homicide decreases by 60%. The Maryland program involves training officers, health care providers and advocates on a set of 11 questions based on the most predictive risk factors. Victims who are identified as high risk are immediately connected with an advocate and encouraged to seek help.

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Only 4% of abused victims had used a domestic violence hotline or shelter within the year prior to being killed by an intimate partner. This staggering number reveals both the life-saving effectiveness of victim services and that, in domestic violence cases, isolation is deadly.

The research that forms the basis for the Maryland Initiative shows that the key to preventing domestic violence homicides is identifying victims who are most at risk, overcoming the isolation that surrounds these victims, and connecting them with services. Some Wisconsin communities have begun to implement cutting edge protocols based on these principles. However, every indicator shows that in every corner of our state there are many victims who are in grave danger and who have not yet been able to connect with life-saving services and support. Therefore, every community should implement strategies and practices that are informed by the state of the knowledge regarding the risk and protective factors for victims. Achieving this goal will require ensuring that victim service providers in every region of the state have the capacity to receive referrals and that law enforcement officers, health care providers and other professionals who have contact with victims are trained on assessing risk and making effective referrals.

Recommendation:

- **Incubate collaborative strategies that harness risk assessment, enhanced coordination and intensive services to prevent domestic violence homicides.**

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APPENDIX

Fair Minimum Budget



STATE OF WISCONSIN
GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

OPERATING A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM
A FAIR MINIMUM

It is difficult, if not impossible, to come up with a cost calculation that applies to all domestic abuse programs in Wisconsin. Although programs share similar characteristics, each also maintains unique services that are aimed at best providing support and advocacy for the victims within the community in which the program exists.

The "Fair Minimum" is not meant to be prescriptive, i.e., programs must offer these salaries or use these staffing patterns. Rather, it is meant to be aspirational – a reasonable and fair staffing pattern for core services and a fair salary for those doing the work. The Fair Minimum may be useful for educating Board members and community partners and can provide a useful touchstone in working towards equalization and fairness for all programs and their staff.

The "Fair Minimum" calculation makes the following assumptions:

- ✓ Costs are included to support a package of "core services" in most DV agencies. This includes an Executive Director; sufficient counseling and advocacy staff to provide the DCF mandated services; enhanced services to children and youth affected by domestic violence (in addition to Children's Programming grants); specialized services to under-represented populations; and administrative and fiscal support staff. Agencies in smaller service areas may decide that they do not need all the staff listed. Conversely, programs in large areas may need additional staff. Programs may also offer additional services or additional staff beyond this core, which will increase their budget.
- ✓ Personnel costs include wages and benefits comparable with other community agencies doing similar human service work.
- ✓ Programs have flexibility in how they define and shape the job duties of various positions, such as mid-level management, fiscal management/support, or administrative support. For example, a mid-level manager may be an associate director, a shelter manager, a domestic abuse services manager, etc.
- ✓ There is an assumption that programs also receive a Children's Programming grant.
- ✓ Local conditions will affect the budget; e.g., programs covering a large geographic area may have increased travel costs.
- ✓ Costs of living, which impact the amounts needed to fund competitive salaries, vary across the state. The "fair minimum" in urban communities may be higher. In rural communities, it may be lower.
- ✓ Shelter coverage was calculated using 26 hours per day (rather than 24) to account for overlap coverage during shift changes, as well as time needed for staff meetings or training.
- ✓ Custodian/shelter maintenance positions can be hourly, salaried, or contracted out for things such as lawn care and snow removal.
- ✓ Programs providing culturally-specific services vary greatly in design, services provided, and area served. Therefore, each program's budget is unique and does not neatly fit into any of the categories. Individualized "fair minimums" should be supported for these programs.
- ✓ Programs hiring bi-lingual staff should fairly compensate for these needed skills by adding 10% to the base salary.

FAIR MINIMUM BUDGET

	Nonresidential Program	Small Shelter (under 20 beds)	Medium Shelter(20-30 beds)	Large Shelter (31+ beds)
Executive Director	\$60,000	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$67,000
Mid level Management	\$25,000 (.5 FTE)	\$50,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$50,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$50,000 (1.0 FTE)
Fiscal Management/Support	\$22,500 (.5 FTE)	\$22,500 (.5 FTE)	\$45,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$45,000 (1.0 FTE)
Client Services/Advocacy Staff	\$80,000 (2.0 FTE)	\$80,000 (2.0 FTE)	\$120,000 (3.0 FTE)	\$160,000 (4.0 FTE)
Children's Program Staff	\$20,000 (.5 FTE)	\$20,000 (.5 FTE)	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$60,000 (1.5 FTE)
Staff for Underserved Populations	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)
Community Education/Systems Advocacy	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)
Administrative Support Staff	\$20,000 (.5 FTE)	\$20,000 (.5 FTE)	\$40,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$40,000 (1 FTE)
Shelter Custodian/Maintenance		\$12,500 (.5 FTE)	\$25,000 (1.0 FTE)	\$31,250 (1.25 FTE)
Shelter Advocates (\$12.50/hr. x 26 hours x 7 x 52)		\$118,300	\$118,300	\$118,300
Subtotal personnel	\$307,500	\$468,300	\$583,300	\$651,550
Required Fringe (payroll taxes, etc, - 10%)	\$30,750	\$46,830	\$58,330	\$65,155
Optional benefits (20%)	\$61,500	\$93,660	\$116,600	\$130,310
Total Personnel	\$399,750	\$608,790	\$758,230	\$847,015
Non Personnel Costs (residential - 30% of total budget)		\$260,910	\$324,955	\$363,006
Non Personnel Costs (non-residential - 25% of total budget)	\$133,250			
Total Budget	\$533,000	\$869,700	\$1,083,185	\$1,210,021