

# **Violence Against Women Act 2005:**

## **Rural Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking and Child Abuse Enforcement Assistance Program**

### ***Expanding Outreach Programs to Rural Communities***

VAWA 2005 reauthorized the program that addresses violence against women in rural communities. However, unlike previous grants that were only available to assist victims of domestic violence, VAWA 2005 has expanded the program to include victims of sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. Additionally, eligibility has also been expanded for rural areas in non-rural states, such as profoundly rural areas in Alabama, West Virginia and Texas.

Related to sexual assault, new language in VAWA 2005 includes set aside funding for services that "meaningfully address" sexual assault in rural communities. The total amount available for sexual assault grantees will be dependent on the overall amount appropriated to the program; but specifically, no less than 25 percent will be allotted for services to "meaningfully address" sexual assault in rural communities.

At such time the amounts appropriated reach \$45 million, the percentage shall increase to 30 percent for sexual assault services; when appropriations reach \$50 million the percentage shall increase to 35 percent; and when appropriations reach the maximum amount of \$55 million, the percentage shall increase to 40. In addition, ten percent of appropriated funds will be allotted to Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations, eight percent will be available for technical assistance and no less than 25 percent of such amounts will be available for specific technical assistance to sexual assault grantees.

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**Rural grant funds are designed to fund cooperative efforts between law enforcement, prosecutors and victim services. In the past, grant funds have led to the development of rural outreach services, the creation of sexual assault and domestic violence task forces and councils, enhanced coordination between law enforcement, prosecutors and victims services and resulted in better enforcement of laws against victims.**

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### ***Addressing Violence Against Women in Rural Communities***

Victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking in rural and remote communities face unique obstacles in their efforts to escape abusive and dangerous relationships. Rural communities often lack the basic infrastructure needed to assist victims. Social and cultural pressures are great, and the dynamics of small communities present challenges in the provision of confidential and safe services. Barriers to interventions in rural communities may include: lack of public and private funding sources for service development, large geographic areas and harsh weather conditions that make travel difficult for victims, under funded and understaffed law enforcement agencies that hamper the criminal justice response, lack of legal representation for protective orders and other civil matters, gaps in the 911 emergency systems that delay responses to crimes in progress, distances of more than 100 miles to the nearest emergency shelter and lack of public transportation, child care and social services.

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