

Investing in Domestic Violence Services in the FY26-27 PA State Budget



The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV) is the oldest statewide domestic violence coalition in the nation. Its network of local domestic violence programs provides free and confidential services to victims of domestic violence and their children in all 67 PA counties. PCADV and its programs rely on appropriations in the state budget allocated to the Department of Human Services through the domestic violence line item.

Response Needed: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Housing Shortage

Pennsylvania is facing a growing gap between housing supply and demand. **Nearly 40% of all households experiencing homelessness are fleeing domestic violence and need safe, affordable housing.** Domestic violence survivors are the largest subpopulation waiting for housing resources in the state and wait longer for help than any other group. The State's 10-Year Housing Action Plan prioritizes the stabilization of housing for DV survivors and calls for increased funding. **YET - the Governor's Budget did not include an increase in funds for the DHS domestic violence line item.** PCADV fully supports this important priority, but funding must be increased to fill the unmet need.

And - it is not just about housing stock. Survivors need a network of support to lead lives free from abuse. **Pennsylvania historically has not invested enough funding to support core services for domestic violence.**

Last year, PCADV domestic violence programs:

Served nearly 86,000 adult and child victims of domestic violence	Provided approx 351,000 hours of counseling to domestic violence victims	Answered over 82,000 domestic violence crisis hotline calls
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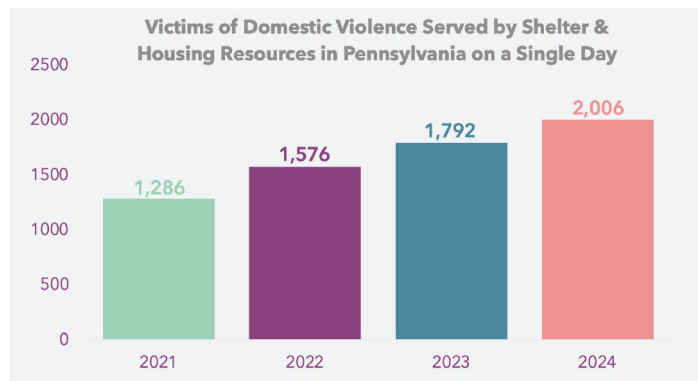
Domestic Violence Line-Item Funding Increase

Domestic violence programs are experiencing a financial crisis that threatens their ability to keep the doors open to those fleeing life-threatening violence in their homes. For more than 1/3 of last year, survivors and the programs that serve them were left without state support because of the budget impasse, forcing curtailed services and staff reductions. Recovery will take time. **Increasing the domestic violence line item by \$8M in FY26-27 is critical for recovery.**

Fiscal Year	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 26-27 Ask
Domestic Violence Funding (in millions)	\$17.357	\$19.093	\$19.093	\$20.093	\$20.093	\$20.093	\$22.593	\$23.063	\$31.063

During a single day in 2024, PCADV programs served over 3,100 victims, but nearly 500 service requests were **unmet because of a lack of financial resources.**

The number of domestic violence victims and their children who need emergency shelter and housing supports continues to grow each year. Rising costs in rents and related basic needs, paired with the potential for reduced federal resources, requires more resources for DV shelter and housing from the state.



Unmet Victim Needs Under FY26 Line-Item Funding Levels

Safe, Stable Housing & Flexible Emergency Shelter

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness. Last year there were 4,227 unmet requests to PCADV programs from domestic violence victims, many of which were for emergency shelter, hotels, emergency relocation, and other housing needs that were left unmet due to a lack of funding. DV providers in PA historically report insufficient funding as the primary reason why survivor requests for housing go unmet, and **domestic violence survivors far outnumber any other subpopulation in households that are seeking both homelessness resources and services.**

4,227
Unmet
requests

Economic Safety: Access to Transportation and Employment

Economic abuse occurs in 99% of DV cases, and economic independence is one of the best predictors of whether a victim will remain free from their abuser. **Yet, funding to support victims' access to transportation, employment opportunities, and other necessities is in short supply.** Financial instability increases vulnerability to abuse, and more resources are needed to support those fleeing violence.

99%
Financial
abuse

Civil Legal Representation

Currently, specific Civil Legal Representation (CLR) Projects for domestic violence victims are unavailable in over two-thirds of the Commonwealth, leaving **61% of counties without CLR services.** This gap is potentially lethal. Victims with legal representation are significantly more likely to obtain all appropriate court ordered provisions to ensure safety for themselves and their children.

61%
Counties
w/o CLR

Medical Advocacy Direct Services

Throughout healthcare settings in Pennsylvania, specially trained domestic violence advocates provide victims with life-saving counseling, support, and advocacy. Support in healthcare settings is often a victim's only access point to DV advocacy, but **only 22% of the Commonwealth's counties have a DV dedicated medical advocate.** Pennsylvania's healthcare shortage and maternal healthcare deserts heighten the need for medical advocates, particularly in rural areas.

only
22%
of counties
have MA

Prevention

PCADV programs do not receive adequate state funding to implement school-based DV prevention programming. The coalition has supported community prevention for the last 10 years through funding from the CDC Delta program, but its future is in jeopardy. PA must make a statewide investment in DV prevention. **Stopping domestic violence before it starts is the most cost-effective strategy to reduce the state's estimated \$156 billion economic lifetime burden.** Recent funding disruptions have resulted in a 17% prevention staff reduction statewide.

17%
Reduction
in staff

Support for Victims of Crime

The 45% decrease in federal victim services funding since FY22 is catastrophic for VSPs in Pennsylvania. Last year the state reduced VOCA awards by 5%, and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) expects more severe cuts if the situation is not addressed.

Pennsylvania VSPs report that the impacts of VOCA cuts on their organizations have resulted in:

- the reduction of emergency housing supports & supportive services for victims of DV
- cuts to civil legal programs
- an approx. 33% reduction in staffing that has forced positions to go part-time or unfilled
- and other impacts such as cuts to crisis response and trauma counseling, even while crime rates rise.

45%
Decrease
in VOCA

Retention of Skilled Program Staff

According to the National Council of Nonprofits, 86.8% of surveyed npos said that salary competition impacts their ability to recruit and retain employees. DV programs are among those who struggle to retain and attract staff due to non-competitive salaries. Many nonprofit professionals must rely on government assistance because of low wages. Each year 1 in 8 Pennsylvanians experiences food insecurity and/or challenges meeting basic needs, and more than 15% of PA private sector jobs are at nonprofits.

87%
Struggle
w/hiring &
retention

Domestic violence programs must be able to offer competitive salaries to attract and maintain staff, keeping employees at a living wage level to reduce the additional burden on government support systems.