



## Federal Government Shutdown & Violence Against Women Act: What Does it Mean for Domestic Violence Programs in Louisiana?

### **Did the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) expire with the government shutdown? What does that mean for the protections and programs in the law?**

Yes, it did expire. VAWA was not reauthorized prior to the shutdown, and many VAWA-funded programs are included in the shutdown. However, reauthorization and appropriations (funding) are two separate things. When a spending bill is eventually passed, appropriations to VAWA will likely be included, with or without reauthorization. In addition, the existing protections enshrined in VAWA continue to exist despite its expiration.

When it comes to VAWA reauthorization, it is more important to do it right than to do it quickly. We urge Congress to pass a Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act that provides critical enhancements and improvements to the law.

*The government shutdown, not the lack of VAWA reauthorization, is the most significant and urgent threat to domestic violence services.*

### **Does the Shutdown Affect Domestic Violence Service Providers?**

Yes. Much of the funding for domestic violence services originates in the US Department of Justice. With the shutdown affecting the Department of Justice, the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), as well as the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), are not processing payment requests. This means that OVW- and OJP-funded nonprofits are not able to draw down funds to reimburse their activities during the shutdown. The longer the shutdown goes on, the more challenging it will be for organizations dependent on VAWA and VOCA funds to continue operations.

### **Are Services Still Available if I Need Them?**

Yes! As of now, all domestic violence programs in Louisiana are open and continuing to provide services. However, staffing reductions and changes in services will eventually become necessary the longer the shutdown continues.

### **What Should Congress Do?**

The most urgent issue for victim service providers and the survivors they serve is access to existing grant funds. Congress must pass a funding bill that extends government funding and ends the shutdown. And they must do this *without* perpetrating harm to families and survivors of violence seeking safety at the US-Mexico border.

After ending the government shutdown, Members of Congress should begin work on a bipartisan Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to expand current protections and increase access to justice and safety for all survivors.

### **What Can I Do to Help?**

Domestic violence programs in Louisiana are continuing to operate without guarantee of payment, placing them in a very precarious position. You can support their work during this time by making a monetary donation to your local [domestic violence program](#).

You can also contact your Members of Congress and ask them to end the government shutdown *without* compounding the difficulties of people seeking safety and asylum at the US-Mexico border.