



The Office on Violence Against Women is a component of the United States Department of Justice. In recognition of the severity of the crimes associated with domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, Congress passed the **Violence Against Women Act of 1994** (VAWA 1994) as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. VAWA is a comprehensive legislative package designed to end violence against women and was reauthorized in both 2000 and 2005. The legislative history of VAWA indicates that Congress seeks to remedy the legacy of laws and social norms that serve to justify violence against women. Since the passage of VAWA, there has been a paradigm shift in how the issue of violence against women is addressed nationwide.

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) was created specifically to implement (VAWA) and subsequent legislation. OVW administers financial and technical assistance to communities around the country to facilitate the creation of programs, policies, and practices aimed at ending domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

VAWA was designed to improve criminal justice responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking and to increase the availability of services for victims of these crimes. VAWA requires a coordinated community response (CCR) to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, encouraging jurisdictions to bring together players from diverse backgrounds to share information and to use their distinct roles to improve community responses to violence against women. These players include, but are not limited to: victim advocates, police officers, prosecutors, judges, probation and corrections officials, health care professionals, leaders within faith communities, and survivors of violence against women. The federal law takes a comprehensive approach to violence against women by combining tough new penalties to prosecute offenders while implementing programs to aid the victims of such violence.

The VAWA 2000 reauthorization strengthened the original law by improving protections for battered immigrants, sexual assault survivors, and victims of dating violence. In addition, it improved the enforcement of protection orders across state and tribal lines. VAWA 2005 continued to improve upon these laws by providing an increased focus on the access to services for underserved populations.

In 2002, legislation was passed that made OVW a permanent part of the Department of Justice with a Presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed Director. Currently, OVW administers 3 formula grant programs and 18 discretionary grant programs, all of which were established under VAWA and subsequent legislation. Since its inception in 1995, OVW has awarded over \$4 billion in grants and cooperative agreements and has launched a multifaceted approach to implementing VAWA. In addition to overseeing 21 grant programs, OVW undertakes numerous special initiatives in response to areas of particular need. These special initiatives allow OVW to explore different innovations in the violence against women field and share knowledge that can be replicated nationwide.



What is Domestic Violence? Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of abusive behavior that is used by an intimate partner to gain or maintain power and control over the other intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

What is Sexual Assault? Sexual assault can be defined as any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs by force or without consent of the recipient of the unwanted sexual activity. Falling under the definition of sexual assault is sexual activity such as forced sexual intercourse, sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape. It includes sexual acts against people who are unable to consent either due to age or lack of capacity.

What is Dating Violence? Dating violence is defined as violence committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors:

- The length of the relationship

- The type of relationship

- The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship

What is Stalking? Stalking can be defined as a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or any other course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.