



COVID Response and Recovery: Supports for Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence
House Judiciary Committee
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Thank you for the invitation to discuss judiciary related COVID supports and recovery. As Vermont moves toward stabilization and recovery, continued support for community-based supports for victims of domestic and sexual violence will be essential. Though not the direct purview of this committee, efforts to support economic security and housing for victims of domestic and sexual violence and financial investment in the 15 Member Organizations of the Vermont Network will have significant impacts on victims and their children.

Specific judiciary-related COVID response and recovery ideas for victims of domestic and sexual violence include:

- Statewide, accessible **e-filing for after-hours relief from abuse orders** which preserves the civil nature of the process and allows survivors to directly access and submit petitions and affidavits to the court after hours.
- Investment in **secure video technology** to allow for remote participation in family court matters.
- Unified, **statewide system for the court to accept admission of evidence** by email or other electronic means to enable parties to present evidence at remote hearings.
- **Re-entry supports for incarcerated victims of domestic and sexual violence**, through expansion of the DIVAS advocacy program for incarcerated victims to provide re-entry services for women and to offer advocacy services for incarcerated male victims.
- **Recommend the investigation into sexual assault allegations** at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility by completing what investigatory work can be completed remotely.
- Expand **low-cost legal representation** for victims of domestic and sexual violence to access representation in family and civil matters.
- Investment in Vermont's Forensic Nursing Program to support **access to medical care for victims of domestic and sexual violence and assist law enforcement through the collection of evidence for violence victims experience** during the pandemic.