



Vermont Network - FY 2025 Budget Memo

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Senate Judiciary, March 28th, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to FY 2025 budget needs. The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence has two primary requests for the FY2025 budget:

1. Permanently clarifying the **\$850,000 in base funding for Domestic Violence Accountability Programs** and;
2. **Revenue stability** for the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund.

1. Domestic Violence Accountability Programs

The Vermont Network is requesting funding and the following budget language in Sec. E.338 of the FY25 budget to clarify the base funding for Domestic Violence Accountability Programs (DVAPs):

Sec. E.338 CORRECTIONS - CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

(b) Of the above appropriation, \$850,000 shall be appropriated in base funding to the Domestic Violence Accountability Programs administered by the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

In the June 28, 2023 Statement of Legislative Intent for the FY 2024 Budget, the General Assembly stated:

*Sec. B.338.1 Corrections – Justice Reinvestment II The amount of \$899,652 was allocated in the following manner as **ongoing base increases**:*

- *\$108,700 to the Department for Children and Families to leverage Medicaid for a increase to Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) grants;*
- ***\$300,000** to the Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence; and*
- *\$490,952 for other Justice Reinvestment II priorities including the Community Justice Centers and Women's Reentry programs.*

Despite this Statement of Intent, the \$300,000 in base DVAP funding is not clearly evident in the FY25 budget as proposed by the House.

Background:

- **\$200,000** was first appropriated in the FY 21 budget from JRI – it was included in the DOC base budget in subsequent years. These funds were intended to replace fees that were previously



charged to program participants. The legislature made a decision to no longer allow fees to be charged by providers.

- **\$350,000** was added to the above \$200,000 in FY 23 BAA from JRI – it was included in the DOC base budget for FY 23, for a total of \$550,000 in FY 23.
- **\$300,000** was added to the DOC base budget of \$550,000 in FY24, for a total appropriation of **\$850,000**. In order to maintain the current level of service, the total base allocation of \$850,000 needs to be clarified.

2. DV/SV Special Fund Revenues

The Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund (DV/SV fund) was established in 2008, set forth in 13 V.S.A. § 5360 and is administered by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services. The fund serves as a primary revenue source for critically important services for victims, as well as systems which improve public responses to domestic and sexual violence. The revenues for the fund are currently comprised of a portion of two revenue sources, a surcharge on criminal and civil judgements and a portion of the marriage license fee.

Despite the important work of community-based domestic and sexual violence advocates, there have been **no ongoing state investments in community-based domestic violence services in over 10 years**. In fact, over the past several years, the General Assembly has needed to fill considerable deficits in the special fund that support these services. Last year the legislature made two changes to improve the revenues to the fund – a temporary, two year increase in marriage license fees and directing the portion of court fees that previously went to the General Fund in part to the DV/SV fund. Despite these changes, there remains a deficit in the fund. Although this year’s deficit has been addressed with one time funds in the amount of \$300,000 by the House in the proposed FY25 budget (through H.880), **the fund needs a new, permanent and dedicated revenue source**. In a year when the legislature is poised to make significant investments in the functioning of our criminal justice system, the needs of victims must also be addressed.

In a 2022 report, the Joint Fiscal Office proposed several potential revenue sources including a surcharge on alcohol and/or firearms¹. We propose the following language be added to the budget:

Sec. 1 Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund Review and Report

(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly to create revenue stability for the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund (“DV/SV Fund”), which supports domestic and sexual violence programs and services in Vermont.

¹ [Criminal-justice-issue-brief-FINAL.pdf \(vermont.gov\)](#)



(b) On or before November 1, 2024, the Joint Fiscal Office shall provide estimated revenues which would result from a surcharge or a percentage of the tax due on the sale of alcohol (7 V.S.A. § 15) cannabis (32 V.S.A. § 7902), a percentage transfer from the Sports Wagering Enterprise Fund (31 V.S.A § 1341), or a surcharge on the manufacture of firearms, firearms parts or ammunition.

(c) The Joint Fiscal Office shall provide a report on the estimated revenues from subsection (b) of this section to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees, the House and Senate Appropriations Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Committee on Finance on or before November 1, 2024.