



FY27 Budget Presentation
Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Charlie Gliserman, Policy Director
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The Vermont Network is Vermont's leading voice on domestic and sexual violence. Our members – 14 independent, nonprofit organizations – provide advocacy and support to survivors in every town across the state.

These services are life-saving and life-changing. Member Organizations offer 24/7 crisis response when a survivor's safety is at risk; emergency shelter for survivors and their children; and confidential assistance navigating medical care, the legal system, housing, and other basic needs. Advocates meet survivors where they are and help them rebuild safety, dignity, and control over their lives.

In 2025, our Member Organizations answered over 23,000 hotline calls – an increase of 1,000 from the previous year – and provided in-person advocacy to nearly 8,000 Vermonters.

Despite the essential nature of these services, they have largely been flat funded through Vermont's Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund for 15 years. The Special Fund, established in 2008 and championed by the late Senator Sears, relies on two revenue sources: a surcharge on civil and criminal court judgements and a surcharge on marriage licenses¹. These revenues are allocated to Vermont's 14 service providers through a funding formula that ensures equitable resources statewide.

The Special Fund's revenues have declined significantly over the past decade. With the exception of one fiscal year, the Special Fund has run a deficit every year since FY15, requiring annual one-time appropriations from the General Assembly to avoid cuts. Even with repeated requests for a sustainable funding solution, the Special Fund is projected to face yet another shortfall in FY27.

Last year, the General Assembly appropriated \$450,000 in one-time funds to stabilize the Special Fund. Of that amount, \$250,000 was distributed to our Member Organizations to support direct services for survivors. The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services (VCCVS), the Special Fund's administrator, retained \$200,000 to maintain sufficient cash balance for quarterly reimbursements.

At the same time, shifts in federal funding continue to pose serious challenges to our field. Our Member Organizations are majority federally-funded, and for some programs, federal funds make up over 90% of their budgets. The ongoing instability of both state and federal funding threatens a core promise that survivors in any Vermont community can access services 24/7.

¹ There is a \$47.00 surcharge on criminal and civil judgements of which \$13.50 goes to the Fund. The marriage license fee in Vermont is \$80.00 of which \$50.00 goes to the Fund.



For the FY27 state budget, the Vermont Network respectfully requests:

1. \$350,000 in Base Funds to Level-Fund Domestic and Sexual Violence Services

While we estimate the Special Fund will ultimately need to support \$5 million in annual expenses, given the current fiscal climate, our request focuses on maintaining current services. We are requesting \$350,000 to fill the projected FY27 deficit in the Special Fund and prevent cuts to community-based direct services beginning July 1. The House budget appropriates this amount as one-time funds; however, we are requesting these funds as base funds.

In addition, VCCVS currently receives no administrative funding for managing the Special Fund. We support the Center's request for \$100,000 in base funding to administer their special funds, which is included in the House budget.

2. \$250,000 in Base Funds to DCF for Statewide System of Supervised Visitation Programs

There is an urgent funding need for Vermont's supervised visitation system. Supervised visitation programs have been chronically underfunded for more than 15 years, leading to multiple program closures and significant gaps in services.

Supervised visitation provides a safe, structured setting where a parent can spend monitored time with their child. Courts and the Department for Children and Families (DCF) order supervised visitation in cases involving risk to a child or non-abusive parent, including many domestic violence cases. The majority of supervised visitation referrals come from the courts.

Today, six independent nonprofit centers operate in Vermont, leaving five counties without a local program. Because these services are often mandated, families in these counties must travel long distances, miss visits entirely, or rely on untrained family members or friends to supervise contact – situations that can pose substantial safety risks.

Even in counties with programs, long waiting lists – sometimes several months to a year – make it difficult for families to comply with court orders.

Last year, the legislature directed DCF and the Judiciary to jointly prepare a report on Vermont's supervised visitation system and its funding needs. The report highlighted the significant challenges facing programs and identified insufficient funding as a primary barrier to ensuring consistent, services statewide.

The House budget includes a one-time increase of \$130,000 in General Funds, allocated to DCF, for supervised visitation programs. We are requesting at least a \$250,000 increase in General Funds – \$120,000 above the House-appropriated amount – to prevent additional program closures and expand access in underserved counties.

We would appreciate Senate Judiciary Committee's strong support for our requests. Thank you for your time and consideration.



Proposed FY27 Budget Language – Supervised Visitation Programs

(a)(1) \$137,500 of the General Fund appropriation in Sec. B.317 of this act, the \$250,000 General Fund appropriation in Sec. B.1100(c)(5) of this act, and \$100,000 of the federal funds appropriation in Sec. B.319 of this act shall be distributed by the Department for Children and Families to supervised visitation programs as follows:

- a. \$437,500 to the six existing community-based supervised visitation sites and the remainder shall be used for start-up funding for additional sites in counties where programs do not currently exist to ensure the programs are operational on or before January 1, 2027; and
- b. \$50,000 to the Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence for statewide supervised visitation coordination to initiate a needs assessment to assist in the development of a sustainable, coordinated system with equitable access to supervised visitation statewide.

(2) The Department shall work with the Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence to develop a funding formula for supervised visitation sites, to identify the community partners to develop two new supervised visitation sites during fiscal year 2027, and to begin planning for the creation of four additional supervised visitation sites, two each to become operational beginning in fiscal years 2028 and 2029.