



# Department of Justice

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**STATEMENT OF  
RACHEL JOHNSON  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**HUGH CLEMENTS  
DIRECTOR  
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**ALLISON RANDALL  
ACTING DIRECTOR  
OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE,  
AND RELATED AGENCIES**

**FOR A HEARING ON  
THE FISCAL YEAR 2024 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET  
APRIL 26, 2023**

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Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Cartwright, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Presidential budget Request for the Department of Justice's (Department) three grant-making components: the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), and the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW).

OJP provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources, to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims, and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Its six program offices (Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA); Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS); Office for Victims of Crime (OVC); Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP); National Institute of Justice (NIJ); and the Sex Offender Sentencing Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART Office)) support state, local, and Tribal crime-fighting efforts, fund thousands of victim service programs annually, help communities manage sex offenders, address the needs of youth in the justice system and children in danger, and provide vital research and statistical data to inform programmatic and policy decisions.

The COPS Office is responsible for advancing community policing nationwide, and it serves as the cornerstone of the nation's crime fighting strategy with grants, supplying a variety of knowledge resource products, and training and technical assistance directly to state, local, and Tribal law enforcement.

OVW provides federal leadership in developing the national capacity to reduce violence against women and administer justice for and strengthen services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. OVW grants establish and bolster support for survivors at nearly any place they might go for help. This includes victim services agencies, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, courts, schools, hospitals, Legal Aid programs, culturally specific and faith-based organizations, and more. OVW grants also support

specialized policing and prosecution units so that crimes involving sexual assault and domestic violence are given the focus and skill these complex cases require.

Importantly, the Department has robust monitoring and auditing measures in place to ensure that the federal tax dollars administered are being managed diligently and dutifully. Across the grant-making components, we have dedicated staff who work tirelessly to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of justice programs and operations by ensuring comprehensive programmatic and financial oversight and review of critical grants.

As the Attorney General stated last month, “[t]he Justice Department is using every resource at our disposal to help protect the safety of our communities.”<sup>1</sup> The grant funding administered by the Department’s three grant-making components, which reaches communities across America, plays a vital role in advancing this mission and supporting some of the Department’s key priorities, like reducing violent crime and gun violence; preventing overdose deaths; and upholding the rule of law.

## **I. OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS**

The President’s budget requests over \$5.7 billion to support the priorities of OJP, which are the following:

- Advancing public safety, reducing violent crime, and increasing community trust;
- Accelerating justice system reforms that promote community safety and well-being, racial equity, and justice for all;
- Transforming the juvenile justice system into one that is effective and equitable, that treats children as children, and empowers youth to lead healthy, productive lives;
- Ensuring rights, access to services, and equity for all victims of crime; and,
- Advancing science and innovation to guide policy and practice.

Of the total OJP budget request, \$3.4 billion in discretionary funding is requested, including:

- More than \$2.4 billion for state, local, and Tribal law enforcement assistance;
- \$760 million for juvenile justice; and
- \$141 million for research, evaluation, and statistics.

Approximately \$2.3 billion in mandatory funding is requested, including:

- \$1.2 billion for the Crime Victims Fund (CVF); and
- \$884 million for a new Gun Violence Prevention Strategic Fund.

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<sup>1</sup> See Attorney General Merrick B. Garland Delivers Opening Statement Before the Senate Judiciary Committee (March 1, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-merrick-b-garland-delivers-opening-statement-senate-judiciary-committee>

## State, Local, and Tribal Assistance

### Safer America Plan

This budget request reflects the President's commitment to advancing community safety, addressing the impact of gun violence, and improving community trust. This includes funding the Administration's Safer America Plan,<sup>2</sup> which is a comprehensive blueprint to protect the safety of our communities through evidence-based strategies that promote effective and accountable crime prevention.

The Administration's proposal will provide communities with much-needed resources to prevent crime and support law enforcement. The Gun Crime Prevention Strategic Fund (Fund) is a core part of the Safer America Plan and is a five-year mandatory program funded at \$884 million annually. This Fund will create a robust, dedicated resource for OJP to help states and cities address emerging issues around gun violence and to develop innovative public safety solutions. The Fund will invest in law enforcement officer safety and wellness and help modernize recruitment and retention practices. The Fund can be used to hire critical personnel beyond law enforcement agents, including crime analysts, technologists, forensic scientists, investigative analysts, prosecutors, legal assistants, social scientists, youth outreach specialists, and behavioral health clinicians to implement comprehensive public safety plans as well as task forces to bring down homicide and gun violence rates. Importantly, the Fund will expand the Crime Gun Intelligence Center and National Public Safety Partnership sites – two successful Department efforts that are helping cities reduce violent crime.

This budget request also includes \$200 million for Community Violence Intervention and Prevention efforts to supplement funding from the landmark Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and provide a total of \$250 million for this critical program in FY 2024. Along with funding requested for the Department of Health and Human Services, this request affirms the President's plan to provide \$5 billion over 10 years for Community Violence Interventions. The FY 2024 President's budget will enable us to continue scaling investments, and focus on street outreach programs, hospital-based violence intervention programs, and other local efforts designed to support community-driven approaches to prevent gun violence as a complement to law enforcement.

Next, the budget furthers our work to advance reforms across the justice system, specifically to promote community safety and well-being, to advance racial equity and expand access to justice. Particularly, the FY 2024 President's budget requests \$300 million in discretionary funding in 2024 and an additional \$14.7 billion in mandatory funding over the following nine years for the Accelerating Justice System Reform initiative, which is a key part of the Administration's Safer America Plan. This effort will provide jurisdictions with resources to implement evidence-informed strategies that prevent violence while easing the burden on police and courts in situations that do not merit their intervention. It also incentivizes reforms that improve community safety, while reducing disparities and unnecessary incarceration. This initial investment would help further OJP's goal of creating an ecosystem of evidence-based

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<sup>2</sup> See FACT SHEET: President Biden's Safer America Plan (July 21, 2022), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/21/fact-sheet-president-bidens-safer-america-plan/>

prevention, intervention, diversion, and reentry programs to build stronger, safer communities, while achieving more equitable outcomes. This is part of the broader effort to advance community safety, address inequities and disparities in the justice system, and help communities address issues that would be better handled outside the justice system.

#### Grants Directly to Law Enforcement and Other Criminal Justice Agencies

The budget also requests over \$542 million for the BJA's Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program, the primary source of criminal justice funding for state and local jurisdictions. This request includes investments of:

- \$40 million for Project Safe Neighborhoods;
- \$20 million for a new training program to address racial profiling and de-escalation; and
- \$28 million for a Criminal Justice Smart Suite program.

This builds on the work of BJA's previous Smart Suite programs, like Smart Policing and Smart Probation, focusing on researcher-practitioner partnerships. In addition, the budget requests \$10 million for the Emergency Federal Law Enforcement Assistance program, which is the only dedicated source of federal emergency assistance to state, local, and Tribal law enforcement agencies, and is in high demand from many communities in the wake of a crisis.

#### Funding for Forensics

This budget request makes substantial investments in DNA-related and forensics programs. Building a strong forensic science infrastructure is vital to the integrity of our justice system. FY 2024 investments include:

- \$147 million for a suite of DNA-Related and Forensic Programs and Activities;
- \$100 million for the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative intended to underscore our commitment to ending the rape kit backlog;
- \$20 million for training to improve the investigation of and response to sexual assault cases;
- \$4 million to identify and disseminate evidence-based practices in sex offender management and sexual violence prevention; and
- \$15 million for a new Forensics Science Research and Development Program.

#### Efforts to Combat Drug Use Disorders

The FY 2024 budget request continues OJP's substantial investments in prevention, diversion, reentry, and trauma-informed services and treatment for people with behavioral health disorders. The President's budget requests \$411 million for the range of programs under the Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act. This includes:

- \$190 million for BJA's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Disorder Program;
- \$88 million to continue important investments in juvenile, adult and family drug courts;

- \$33 million for the Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program; and
- \$40 million for the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program, which includes the relatively new Connect and Protect effort that helps law enforcement and behavioral health partners work together in responding to crises.

We have seen the successes of these programs in places like Kentucky and Pennsylvania, where last year, \$1.3 million was awarded under Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act programs to the City of Scranton (PA) to reduce overdose deaths, and \$1 million was awarded to the Whitley County Standing Together for Appalachian Resilience (KY) to reduce the impact of illicit substances on people and the community, in a county where the overdose rate is nearly twice the National average.

### Reentry Initiatives

Additionally, the President's budget requests \$117 million for Second Chance Act programs, including site-based work, as well as continued support for the National Reentry Resource Center and the new Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Program. The safety of our communities greatly depends on the educational, employment, treatment and other opportunities we afford to all who come into contact with the justice system. The requested funding will prepare and support people coming out of America's prisons, jails and juvenile facilities, reducing recidivism and supplying the tools needed to build productive, successful lives.

### **Juvenile Justice Programs**

Research shows that staying in school and connected with family and the community is the best strategy to improve the future of young people. OJP's goal is to implement this strategy to the fullest extent possible. To support this goal, the budget requests \$760 million for juvenile programs, which represents a substantial and much-needed increase of \$360 million over FY 2023 appropriated levels. OJJDP Part B Formula Grants program request totals \$157 million, which is a key source of funding for states seeking to implement comprehensive juvenile justice plans. Substantial increases are also requested for youth mentoring, efforts to address missing and exploited children, and delinquency prevention programs.

The President's budget recognizes the importance of intensifying this work to improve access to justice for children. To that end, the budget proposes several new programs to improve the juvenile justice system, including \$30 million for the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Collaboration Program to help the field address the complex needs of dual-status youth, and \$15 million to Eliminate Records-Related Barriers to Youth Success to address the challenges and opportunities of sealing and expungement of criminal history records.

### **Services for Victims of Crime**

Providing services and support for victims remains a top priority for OJP. In FY 2024, the President's budget requests an obligation cap of \$1.2 billion for victim programs supported by CVF. The proposed reduction in FY 2024 seeks to align spending with estimated projections

for revenue in order to protect the balance of the fund over the long term so that it can continue to serve victims in the years ahead. In recognition of the critical importance of CVF programs as a means to support victims of crime, the proposed funding strategy represents the most effective means to maximize funding for the Fund in a sustainable manner.

OVC is the largest federal funder of services to victims of human trafficking in the United States. Programs supported by OVC are a centerpiece of the Department's work to tackle the challenges posed by human trafficking. To support those ongoing efforts, the budget includes \$107 million to support OVC's human trafficking programs to continue to empower communities to respond to human trafficking and offer essential services to survivors of human trafficking to aid them in their recovery.

### **Advancement of Research and Scientific Innovation**

Finally, this budget reflects the Department's strong commitment to improve our understanding of crime and justice issues through research and scientific innovation. Over the last two years, we have worked to ground policy and program decisions in science and data. The President's budget will enable us to increase our investments in vital research and statistical activities for the criminal justice field at large.

For example, the FY 2024 budget requests \$63 million for NIJ and \$78 million for BJS to meet a number of data collection and research priorities. For instance, the BJS budget supports statistical data collections for death in custody reporting and maternal health of incarcerated women. The budget also requests funding to support the National Crime Victimization Survey – one of the Nation's key data collections of crime and the only source of data on crimes not reported to the police – through direct appropriations, rather than having it partially funded by CVF dollars, which will also serve to make additional funding available for victims' assistance programs.

The NIJ budget supports new research focused on police reform, including measuring the impact of policing programs and practices on community engagement and trust. These are vital data points that will help strengthen the impact of policing programs. Funding will broaden the social and behavioral sciences with a more targeted investment in forensics research and expand STEM capacity at Minority Serving Institutions through the provision of technical assistance and resources. The President's budget will support the implementation of the Evidence Act, which requires changes to how the Federal government manages and uses the information it collects, emphasizing the strategic use of data by supporting internal evaluations of the Department's investments, activities, and outcomes.

Importantly, the FY 2024 budget requests that three percent of OJP's discretionary budget authority be set-aside to support research and statistics, increased from two percent in the 2023 enacted appropriation. In total, the budget includes over \$235 million for research, evaluation, and statistics for OJP's two science agencies. This is a much-needed investment and a step toward better aligning funding levels for the Department's science agencies with their counterparts across the federal government. This will build critical knowledge for the field, and greatly inform our policy and program work at the Department.

## II. OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES

The COPS Office remains steadfast in its commitment to law enforcement; the communities they serve; and the priorities of the Administration in promoting constitutional policing, increasing access to justice, supporting crime victims, protecting the public from crime and evolving threats, and building trust between law enforcement and the community. Not only does the COPS Office provide funding to hire and train community policing professionals, but the COPS Office also administers programs and resources that help law enforcement agencies rebuild the bridges of trust with their respective communities. Multiple rigorous evaluations, including studies conducted by Princeton University and the University of Chicago have demonstrated that the additional community policing officers funded through the COPS Hiring Program (CHP) result in significant decreases in crime without corresponding increases in arrests.

In FY 2024, the President's budget request includes \$651 million in discretionary resources for the COPS Office to assist state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies in their efforts to prevent crime, enforce laws, and represent the rights and interests of the American people. This level is equal to the FY 2023 President's budget request, and some funding highlights include:

- \$537 million for the COPS Hiring Program (CHP) to assist in hiring additional sworn law enforcement professionals, including the following set-asides:
  - \$40 million for the Tribal Resources Grant Program;
  - \$6 million for the Tribal Access Program (TAP);
  - \$8 million for the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Program;
  - \$35 million for Community Policing Development
  - \$40 million for Regional Information Shared Services (RISS); and,
  - \$20 million for Collaborative Reform.
- \$15 million for Anti-Methamphetamine Task Forces;
- \$11 million for the Police Act Program;
- \$35 million for Anti-Heroin Task Forces; and
- \$53 million for the COPS School Violence Prevention Program

Of note, the request also includes \$10.9 billion in mandatory funding over five years to supplement the COPS Hiring Program. In total, the request supports the President's Safer America Plan goal to hire 100,000 police officers over five years.

### **Hiring**

The COPS Office awards federal funds to hire community policing professionals; develop and test innovative policing strategies; and provide training and technical assistance to Tribes, community members, local government leaders, and all levels of law enforcement. The CHP has funded the hiring of law enforcement officers for nearly 30 years. During that time, more than 136,000 officers have been hired to work in communities across the country.

The COPS Office is aware of the acute challenges facing the law enforcement profession pertaining to recruitment and retention and is working to identify both short-term responses and long-term strategies to support law enforcement agencies in their efforts to recruit and retain qualified professionals.

## **Training**

Through the FY 2024 President's budget, the COPS Office will fulfill its mission of advancing public safety through community policing by delivering certified classroom and virtual training to law enforcement professionals in more than 30 topics ranging from community policing fundamentals to crisis intervention, de-escalation, and active shooter response. With this funding—available at no cost to law enforcement—we anticipate that between 30,000 and 40,000 officers will complete a COPS Office training in 2023.

The COPS Office will work closely with criminal justice stakeholders and other Department components to implement the Law Enforcement De-escalation Training Act of 2022, which will equip law enforcement officers with the tools to respond effectively and safely to people in crisis.

## **Officer Safety & Wellness**

Another priority of the COPS Office is promoting officer safety and wellness. The national Officer Safety and Wellness (OSW) Group brings together representatives from law enforcement, federal agencies, and the research community to focus attention on this critical aspect of public safety. Semi-annual meetings of the OSW Group help amplify critical officer safety issues and result in reports that highlight the latest research and best practices around different safety and wellness topics. The COPS Office will remain committed to improving and expanding the delivery of and access to mental health and wellness services for law enforcement through funding from the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act. The COPS Office will also maintain oversight and coordination efforts of the National Blue Alert Network, which promotes rapid dissemination of information to law enforcement, the media and the public about violent offenders who have killed, seriously injured, or pose an imminent threat to law enforcement, or when an officer is missing in connection with official duties.

## **Drug Prevention**

As law enforcement, other first responders, and community members continue to battle the availability of illegal drugs, the COPS Office provides resources to support those efforts through two funding initiatives. The COPS Anti-Methamphetamine Program and the Anti-Heroin Task Force Program support investigations of illicit activities related to the distribution of heroin and the unlawful distribution of prescription opioids, methamphetamine precursor diversion, and heroin and methamphetamine trafficking, and as well as prevention efforts related to the prescription drug, heroin, and methamphetamine epidemics. These programs are in addition to those administered by OJP.

## **Collaborative Reform Initiative**

Communities across the country rely on the high quality direct technical assistance to law enforcement agencies through the Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC), which is a consortium of the most prominent law enforcement membership organizations. The program provides additional technical services to law enforcement agencies needing more intensive assistance through the Critical Response program, which is designed for agencies experiencing high-profile events, major incidents, or sensitive issues of varying need, and the Organizational Assessments program, which offers in-depth and long-term assistance on systemic issues that can challenge community trust and confidence. The COPS Office has worked with cities like Ferguson (MO), Detroit (MI), and, most recently, Memphis (TN) to provide these critical services to law enforcement agencies. It is vital for the COPS Office to continue to support innovative programs that respond directly to the emerging needs of state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement for research-based guidance on the most effective ways to prevent and address crime and disorder within their communities.

The COPS Office also fulfills its mission of advancing public safety through community policing by promoting collaboration among law enforcement, community members, academic institutions, and other key stakeholders to implement initiatives that have proven effective in helping to prevent crime. Research on the COPS Office demonstrates a positive relationship between community-oriented policing strategies and public safety outcomes. A study published in *Journal of Public Economics* showed that the crime problems targeted by COPS Office grantees “led to a statistically precise drop in crime in subsequent years for four of the seven index crimes.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, work by Princeton University that estimates the causal effects of police on crime concluded that an additional COPS-funded officer is associated with 2.9 fewer violent crimes and 16.23 fewer property crimes per 10,000 residents in the year following their hiring.<sup>4</sup>

### **III. OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The FY 2024 budget request for OVW of \$1 billion represents the strong commitment of the Administration and the Department to ending domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking and giving communities resources to sustain and enhance programs and services that keep survivors safe and hold offenders accountable. Congress created new tools for addressing these crimes and opened new avenues to safety and justice when it reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) last year. The FY 2024 budget request reflects the need to equip communities with these tools so that victim services and criminal and civil justice systems can keep pace with threats to safety in a changing world. It would increase formula grant funds available for states to respond to violence in the way that works best for them, as well as for proven-effective discretionary grants such as Legal Assistance for Victims and Improving Criminal Justice Responses. The budget request builds on the meaningful increase provided by Congress last year, which will make a significant difference. But more is needed to combat these violent crimes.

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<sup>3</sup> *Journal of Public Economics* by Evans and Owens, Volume 91 (2007)

<sup>4</sup> Mello, Steven. 2017. *More COPS, Less Crime*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.

## Coordinated Community Response

The cornerstone of OVW's grant programming is a coordinated community response. Such a response requires that law enforcement, prosecutors, victim services providers, and others work together across systems to connect victims to the services they need, make the justice process more navigable for victims, and stop offenders from causing further harm. One of myriad examples worth highlighting comes from Bucks County, Pennsylvania. With OVW funding, a nonprofit service provider, A Woman's Place, helped a mother of three secure a protection order that ensured that the woman and her children could stay in their home. But the woman's husband continued to violate the order and stalk the family, terrifying the children and damaging her home. With support from a victim advocate, the woman courageously testified in court about the impact of the abuse. The abuser's sentence included incarceration, and the prosecutor was able to secure restitution for the woman to cover the damages to her home.

Stories like this abound in the reports that OVW receives from grantees in every state and territory. In Virginia, the City of Lynchburg's OVW grant supports a Protection Order Advocate based in a courthouse, as well as a prosecutor and an investigator dedicated specifically to handling sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking cases. The city reported multiple improvements attributable to these investments. For example, we are told more victims were seeking protection orders with the help of the court-based advocate, whereas before many victims would give up midway through the process, finding themselves overwhelmed and confused. By building stronger cases that rely on multiple types of evidence and not just victim testimony, the prosecutor's office also reported a significantly lower percentage of cases that were declined due to a lack of victim participation and insufficient evidence.

## Supporting Survivors

Across the country, OVW grant dollars open doors to survivors who need support to heal and rebuild their lives after violence. Hundreds of thousands of victims have their service needs filled each year through funding from OVW's two largest formula grant programs, STOP Violence Against Women (STOP) and the Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP). Even so, funded programs report that the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges have depleted existing resources. A subgrantee in western Maryland explained recently that, from 2020 to 2021, "the number of victims served increased 32%, but more notably, the number of *services* provided to those individuals increased 134%."<sup>5</sup> They went on to explain that this "extraordinary increase" can be traced to a number of issues, including "the degree of dangerousness has increased, more severity in the level of physical injuries (including strangulation and use of weapons), more stalking (including cyberstalking), and a significant increase in untreated mental health and substance abuse issues."<sup>6</sup> More funds are needed to respond to this increased need. The subgrantee noted that "funding has not been available to increase the number of staff who are providing these much more intense and frequent services."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Resource Center, Inc., (Submitted March 14, 2022), STOP Formula program subgrantee's Annual Performance Report for Calendar year 2021.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

The President’s FY 2024 budget would address these funding shortfalls through \$45 million and \$21.5 million increases, respectively, in OVW’s STOP and SASP funding for states.

STOP and SASP funding, as well as Rural Program funding, are also critical to reaching communities where limited infrastructure and geographical isolation make it especially challenging for victims to pursue safety and justice. Formula program subgrantees report that about one-quarter of the victims they serve live in rural areas where resources can be scarce. For example, Mountain Comprehensive Care Center, in Prestonsburg, Kentucky, provides wraparound services that include transportation to medical appointments, court, food banks, and more. The Center Against Sexual and Family Violence in El Paso, Texas, also told us how their OVW-funded Coordinated Community Response Team has established relationships in five neighboring rural counties that help them ensure victims can access resources right in their hometowns.

One of the greatest gaps OVW grants help fill is for transitional housing and emergency shelter. For some survivors, being able to take refuge with their children in a domestic violence emergency shelter is how they live to see another day. Due to increased demands, however, emergency shelters can only provide short-term relief, sometimes lasting only a couple of weeks or a couple of months at most. Transitional housing gives survivors stability for their families as they secure employment, education, or take other steps to ensure self-sufficiency. And yet, shortages in stable and affordable housing—a longstanding challenge—have grown worse in many communities in recent years. Rent costs have risen at record rates, meaning survivors are forced to navigate a highly competitive market while many also face difficulty finding landlords who are willing to work with them. VAWA grantees and subgrantees are doing everything they can to help, providing approximately two million housing bed nights to victims and their kids each year. Nearly nine out of ten victims leaving a housing funded by the Transitional Housing Program report perceiving a lower risk of violence, and the majority of victims exit to permanent housing of their choice. To bolster the ability of communities to help victims find stable housing and achieve independence from their abusers, the President’s FY 2024 budget requests a \$40 million increase for this program.

As critical as housing is, VAWA grants do much more than put a roof over someone’s head. For survivors who are in immediate crisis or struggling with the lingering impacts of past trauma, finding a trusted advocate at a rape crisis center helps them recover from the harm they may have never disclosed to anyone before. Research shows that survivors who have advocates may endure less psychological distress and fewer physical health problems, and suffer less self-blame, guilt, and depression than victims who do not have an advocate.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to advocating for survivors and sheltering them, over a recent two-year period OVW grantees answered nearly half a million hotline calls and trained hundreds of thousands of people on how to respond competently and compassionately when a survivor asks for help. Annually, OVW discretionary grants provide victim services, offer legal assistance to tens of

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<sup>8</sup> See e.g., Patterson, D. (2015). Understanding how advocates can affect sexual assault victim engagement in the Criminal Justice process. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30, 1987–1997. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514552273>; and Patterson, D., & Campbell, R. (2010). Why rape survivors participate in the criminal justice system. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 38(2), 191–205. <http://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20359>

thousands of survivors whose safety hinges on what happens in court, and perform hundreds of medical forensic exams to meet sexual assault survivors' healthcare and evidence collection needs. The FY 2024 request includes a \$40 million increase for OVW's Legal Assistance Program, which is the primary source of OVW funding for legal services, and a \$6 million increase for its Justice for Families Program, which improves court responses to families experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

### **Improving the Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking**

Grants and subgrants also support the salaries of law enforcement officers and prosecutors, ensuring that cases are properly investigated and charged, and that survivors can attain safety and justice. Many of these professionals are part of the specialized law enforcement units that OVW grants help finance, which may decrease the frequency and severity of future domestic violence and produce higher case clearance rates, compared to a standard patrol response.<sup>9</sup> In Lawrence County, Alabama, STOP Formula dollars support one such domestic violence unit in the sheriff's office that, in addition to responding to calls and investigating cases, assists victims with filing paperwork, provides transportation to court, and offers referrals for counseling, medical care, and legal assistance. In Marshall County, Alabama, a subgrant funds a prosecutor dedicated exclusively to domestic violence cases. Research suggests that jurisdictions with specialized domestic violence prosecution units, like those funded through OVW grants, may prosecute these crimes at a higher rate.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the requested increase for the STOP Program, the President's budget includes a \$19.5 million increase for OVW's Improving Criminal Justice Responses Program, which is another significant source of funding for specialized law enforcement and prosecution units.

### **Helping Vulnerable Communities**

Demand for OVW grants perennially outpaces supply, meaning there are longstanding resource shortfalls across the country that have been exacerbated in recent years due to factors including the lasting toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. These programs provide critical support for Tribal communities where rates of violence against women are high, justice solutions often fall short, and victim services may be sparse or not fully responsive to American Indian and Alaska Native survivors' needs. They also ensure that culturally specific services, and services by and for members of underserved communities, are available to survivors who face barriers to accessing support at mainstream organizations. The FY 2024 request includes increases of \$24 million and \$5 million for OVW's Culturally Specific Services Program and Underserved Populations Program, with total direct appropriations of \$35 million and \$10 million respectively.

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<sup>9</sup> See e.g., Exum, M. L., Hartman, J. L., Friday, P. C., & Lord, V. B. (2014). Policing domestic violence in the post-SARP era: the impact of a domestic violence police unit. *Crime & Delinquency*, 60(7), 999–1032.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128710382345>; Friday, P., Lord, V. B., Exum, M. L., & Hartman, J. L. (2006). *Evaluating the impact of a specialized domestic violence police unit* (NCJ 215916). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g., Smith, B., Davis, R., Nickles, L. & Davies, H. (2001). *An evaluation of efforts to implement no-drop policies: two central values in conflict, final report*. (NCJ 187772). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice; and Gerwartz, A., Weidner, R.R., Miller, H., & Zehm, K. (2006). Domestic violence cases involving children: Effects of an evidence-based prosecution approach. *Violence & Victims*, 21, pp. 213-229.

OVW grantees work tirelessly to ensure safety and justice are within *every* survivor's reach. They are stretching each dollar as far as it will go, trying not only to address these crimes after the fact, but to prevent future violence. The FY 2024 budget request aims to sustain this lifesaving work while also ensuring there is adequate funding to launch new programs and expand those already in existence whose statutory scope was widened by the 2022 reauthorization of VAWA. To this end, the FY 2024 budget requests funding for newly authorized programs: \$20 million to enhance victim access to sexual assault nurse exams, \$10 million for grants to local law enforcement to address cybercrimes against individuals, and \$4 million to establish a national resource center to improve response to cybercrimes against individuals. Similarly, increased funding across OVW programs, including the STOP and SASP formula programs, will enhance implementation of VAWA 2022 provisions that authorize support for adult survivors of child sexual abuse and greater access to legal services for victims.

#### **IV. TRIBAL ASSISTANCE**

Importantly, this budget supports efforts to help Tribal nations and Tribal partners to build safe and healthy communities. For over the last decade, the Department has implemented the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation, which is a streamlined grant application program for tribes. Together, OJP, and the COPS Office fund applications submitted for Public Safety and Community Policing; Comprehensive Tribal Justice Systems Strategic Planning; Tribal Justice Systems Program; Tribal Justice System Infrastructure Program; Children's Justice Act Partnerships for Indian Communities; Juvenile Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts; and the Tribal Youth Program.

OJP's budget continues to invest \$60 million in Tribal Assistance for comprehensive justice and public safety activities and allows for up-to-five-percent set-aside from the CVF for Tribal victim assistance. In addition, the budget requests an increase of \$5 million for the Tribal Access Program to help tribes access national crime information systems. The budget also provides \$30 million for a Tribal youth program, an increase of \$13 million over the FY 2023 appropriated levels. Through CTAS, OJP provides funding for tribes to engage in comprehensive justice system strategic planning that will improve Tribal justice and safety; develop, support, and enhance adult Tribal justice systems to prevent crime related to opioid, alcohol, and other substance abuse; and renovate, expand, and/or replace Tribal justice facilities to enhance facility conditions and/or add capacity for recidivism-reduction programming. Additionally, Tribal jurisdictions are eligible applicants for a vast array of criminal and juvenile justice grant programs administered by OJP.

In addition, the FY 2024 budget request for OVW includes over \$104.7 million in direct appropriations and set asides to support the work of tribes combating domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking in their communities – a \$23.7 million increase over FY 2023 appropriations levels. This programming includes an array of victim services such as crisis response, shelter, and legal assistance; funding for Tribal criminal justice systems, including those working to exercise Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders or cross-deputize Tribal prosecutors to appear in federal court; and research on violent crimes against American Indian and Alaska Native women.

These are all key programs to help Tribal communities, including Alaska Native Villages. The FY 2024 budget demonstrates the Department's continued support for comprehensive law enforcement, prevention, intervention, and support services in Indian country, and we recognize that solving this crisis requires that we work in partnership with Tribal communities.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The Department's grant-making components touch many facets of American communities. We are working diligently across the components to ensure that we continue to support our state, local, and Tribal law enforcement counterpart; provide vital resources and support to victims of crimes across the country; prevent and reduce domestic and sexual violence; improve our juvenile justice system; enhance our data collection efforts; and elevate evidence-based policies to improve the way we structure our programs and respond to needs of law enforcement and communities across the country. The President's FY 2024 budget reflects the Department's commitment to supporting public safety in communities nationwide, and we thank you for the opportunity to address the Subcommittee.