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Governor Newsom's budget puts at risk hundreds of thousands of Californians who experience violence each year

Advocates expect mental health crises and deaths without additional funding for victim services

SACRAMENTO, CA – Governor Newsom today put forward his January proposed budget without any plans to close a huge funding gap that will leave hundreds of thousands of Californians who experience violence each year without life-saving services. Amanda Gould from the California VOCA Advocacy Alliance and the Los Angeles LGBT Center released the following statement in response:

“The Governor’s budget fails to adequately fund essential services for survivors of human trafficking, sexual violence, domestic violence, child abuse and other forms of violence. Last year, the state invested in short-term and long-term solutions, but, for at least the next five years, communities will need \$176 million each year to bridge gaps that still exist. If these funds are not in the budget, [catastrophic federal Victims of Crime Act cuts](#) will force hundreds of thousands of Californians to wait months or travel long distances to access lifesaving services needed at a moment’s notice.

Cutting survivors of violence off from essential services is like standing by while they drown instead of providing them with a life jacket: When there is nowhere safe to escape in the midst of human trafficking and domestic violence, victims are more likely to be killed. When there are no advocates to call, more survivors of child abuse and sexual assault will experience mental health crises without any relief in sight. California survivors deserve to be safe.

Governor Newsom's leadership is more important than ever to insulate Californians against federal funding reductions—and also outright interruptions—if the incoming administration and new Congress enact policies and practices that allow this to happen.

We call on Governor Newsom to include bridge funding to protect essential services until the [new California Crime Victims Fund](#) becomes strong enough to provide support on an ongoing basis. This will help survivors during the most dangerous and traumatic moments of their lives—[816,000](#) of whom received services in FY 22-23. At the center of our budget request are Californians navigating trauma: the child who has spoken out against their abuser and now must navigate the complex legal system after reporting to the police; the trans survivor of hate violence who needs support navigating her safety from her stalker and legal advocacy in reporting to police; the survivor being forced into homelessness because they are fleeing domestic violence; and the survivor of sexual assault and reproductive coercion forced to navigate complex healthcare systems after suffering a massive trauma.

Over 200 organizations are calling on the Governor and legislature to provide [\\$176 million](#) each year for five years. This represents a life jacket for Californians who need immediate support in a crisis—disproportionately women, LGBTQ+ folks, and Black, Indigenous & Native and People of Color. This funding ensures that:

- when survivors call a crisis hotline, there will be an advocate on the other end to help them access safety.
- domestic violence survivors will be able to access shelter when they must flee from violence or lose their housing.
- LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual assault will have access to mental health care and critical and life saving legal support.
- children will be listened to by a caring and specially trained interviewer during forensic interviews in child abuse investigations.

In addition to promoting safety and healing, this funding makes fiscal sense, representing a modest investment of \$126.23 per person served by VOCA-funded programs (based on the [2022-23 Joint Legislative Budget Committee report](#)).

Given the high prevalence of intimate partner violence and physical violence in California, these essential services create a safety net that makes us all safer. The [2023 CalVex study](#), which uncovers the state of violence in California, revealed that 1 in 2 adults (46%) experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime—and 1 in 20 Californians have experienced physical violence in the past year. It is highly likely that we or someone we know will need victim services at some point.

The California VOCA Alliance urges Governor Newsom, Speaker Robert Rivas, Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire, and legislators from both parties to allocate \$176 million every year for five years. We cannot continue to rely on federal funding streams that have drastically declined over the years—and could be in even more peril under the new administration and Congress.”

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About the California VOCA Alliance

The California VOCA Advocacy Alliance represents over 200 organizations that hundreds of thousands of California victims and survivors depend on each year. Our large coalition works to advance the rights of survivors of human trafficking, child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, and others. We are dedicated to supporting survivors, advocates and communities, and have a common goal of advocating for equitable access to core services.