



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTIONALLIANCE

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Governor's Budget Fails to Address Critical Funding Gap for Sexual Assault Victim Services

The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, Virginia's leading voice on sexual and domestic violence in Virginia, has appreciated the opportunity to work in partnership with the Governor and his staff toward strengthening Virginia's response to victims of sexual assault. This morning, when Governor McAuliffe released his 2016-2018 budget, the Action Alliance was disappointed that the Governor's leadership on sexual violence policy initiatives is not reflected in his fiscal and budgetary priorities.

"We've asked Governor McAuliffe and his predecessors to close a significant funding gap for sexual assault victim services in the Commonwealth's budget and the requests continue to fall on deaf ears", says Kristi VanAudenhove, Executive Director of the Action Alliance. "Policy leaders and the public speak frequently about their frustrations with victims choosing not to report assaults and participate in the criminal justice system. Yet the Commonwealth has not prioritized sexual assault victim services and has not invested the needed resources to ensure that victims of sexual assault have access to confidential, trauma-informed services."

VanAudenhove continues, "While we celebrate our shared policy successes, the outcomes we desire will not be fully realized until we invest in sexual assault victim services. Sexual assault continues to be significantly underreported, and when victims do choose to report an assault, very few perpetrators are ever prosecuted. If we want victims to engage in the criminal justice system, we need to ensure they have access to trauma-informed crisis and support services."

Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies provide a variety of services for victims of sexual assault in their communities including 24-hour crisis hotlines, accompaniment and support during hospital forensic exams, information on and support during criminal justice system processes, trauma counseling, and community education and prevention services.

Studies show that sexual assault victims who receive advocacy services from Sexual Assault Crisis Centers are more likely to stay engaged in the criminal justice system and cooperate with investigation and prosecution.

The Action Alliance had submitted a 2016 budget request to increase funding for sexual violence by \$2 million each year in the 2016-2017 budget. The Action Alliance will continue to request additional state funding for sexual and domestic violence intervention and prevention services until we attain the \$12 million needed annually to stabilize existing services and the additional \$6 million needed to enhance and expand sexual and domestic violence prevention and intervention services for adults, youth, and children.

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About the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

The Action Alliance has been Virginia's leading voice on sexual and domestic violence for more than 30 years and enhances response and prevention efforts through training, public policy advocacy, public awareness programs, and technical assistance to professionals. www.vsdvalliance.org @VActionAlliance

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