



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTION ALLIANCE

January 10, 2014

Dear Sexual and Domestic Violence Member Agency Directors:

There has been considerable attention in the last few weeks to **House Bill 1 and Senate Bill 4**—the bills that represent one prong of our two-pronged strategy to “**close the gap**” between current funding levels and what is actually needed to provide prevention and intervention services in your communities. I am writing today to share exciting news with you and also to provide answers to some of the questions that have emerged as various groups and agencies have taken positions on these bills. Please share this communication with members of your staff, your board, your volunteers and your community team who have expressed interest or concern about these bills.

First the exciting news:

Both prongs of our two-pronged strategy are moving forward!!

One: Drafts of revised Bills have been completed so that the sponsors will be able to offer substitutes for House Bill 1 (HB1) and Senate Bill 4 (SB4) that clearly establish a new authority of the Criminal Injuries and Compensation Fund to administer state and federal funding for sexual and domestic violence prevention and intervention. This will provide a “home” for both state and federal funds and the first opportunity in our history to **streamline the process for funding** both sexual and domestic violence, both intervention and prevention and services to both children and adults.

Two: Budget amendments have been requested to substantially **increase the level of state funding** for community sexual and domestic violence agencies. In the House, funding has been requested in the amount of \$10.6 million in the first year and \$18 million in the second year. In the Senate \$18 million has been requested for both the first and second years.

Some of the questions that might concern you:

- **What is a “substitute bill” and how does that change things?**
 - Often legislators request a Bill be drafted early in the process of discussing an issue. This alerts colleagues and the public to the fact that the legislator is taking up that issue. The draft is written before all of the details are worked out—and when the Bill comes up for discussion the “substitute Bill” is introduced with the fully developed proposal. This is what happened with HB1 and SB4—place holder Bills were filed to signal the high level of priority for streamlining the sexual and domestic violence funding, even before all of the details

were worked out. The substitute Bills will not become public until the sponsors introduce them. Rest assured that the sponsors are working closely with the Action Alliance to finalize the drafts. There is no change in strategy on the part of the legislators—those placeholder Bills were simply not as fully developed or specific as the substitute Bills will be.

- **How did the Action Alliance choose the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF) as the location for streamlining the funds? Does CICF have the ability to administer our grants?**
 - The Public Policy Committee of the Action Alliance considered several options as they considered the best “home” for the SDV funds. Staff researched how funding is administered in other states, met with budget and agency staff at many levels in Virginia, and proposed several possibilities. CICF was the best “fit” with the criteria the Public Policy Committee had created for the “ideal” fund administrator: commitment to a wide range of both prevention or intervention services, an equal and high level of investment in both sexual and domestic violence, willing to work closely with the field to explore options for both streamlining and simplifying the funding process, and commitment to a high level of accountability and transparency. While CICF will be new to administering SDVA grants, they have a long track record of recognizing a wide range of victim needs—health care, trauma counseling, criminal justice advocacy, relocation and more—as well as a strong track record of supporting community collaboration. CICF has done an exceptional job managing victim compensation funding as well as project grants for training and resources and we have every reason to believe that the agency will be able to successfully build the structure required to manage SDVA grants in a timely manner.

- **Which state and federal funds are proposed to be included in the new Sexual and Domestic Violence Victim Services Fund at CICF?**
 - In the substitute Bills for HB 1 and SB 4 the new Fund is authorized to accept state and federal funds that will be granted to sexual and domestic violence agencies for sexual and domestic violence intervention and prevention services. The language also authorizes grants to the state sexual and domestic violence coalition and specifies that funds may be used to support administrative and operational functions. The Action Alliance has requested that the federal FVPSA and SASP funds be moved into the new Sexual and Domestic Violence Victim Services Fund, as well as the VOCA funding that currently flows to SDVAs. We have also requested that all state funding from general funds and fees that is currently granted or appropriated to SDVAs be moved into this fund. While state funds can be moved as part of the budget process, moving federal funds will require specific planning and attention to grant cycles and funding requirements which may require a longer period of time.

- **Can state and federal funds be combined into one funding stream? (In other words, is it really possible to simplify and streamline the funding process?)**
 - It is absolutely imperative that SDVAs maintain a high degree of accountability for how we spend the public funds that are generated through taxes, fees and fines to support sexual and domestic violence services. CICF will have to establish a process that supports adherence to the rules that are attached to each state and federal funding stream.. Fortunately there are models in Virginia and in other states for achieving this. There are a variety of accounting and time/task management tools that will support tracking funding and activities for multiple funding streams at the state and local level. Based on their administration of the sexual assault forensic payment program and compensation funds, there is no doubt that CICF will simplify and streamline the funding

process. CICF has also demonstrated a commitment to getting funding out into the field by allocating money to capacity building through training.

- **How can local SDVAs advocate for HB1 and SB 4 now that one of our funders (DCJS) has expressed opposition to the Bills? Won't that jeopardize our grants?**
 - While DCJS and the Action Alliance often collaborate on statewide policy work there are also many times when our official positions are different. Nevertheless, we continue to work together because our shared commitment to survivors far outweighs any specific policy differences. We encourage you to have faith in the professionalism of our colleagues at DCJS and in other state agencies where concerns have been expressed. Funding decisions follow established criteria and are not based upon grantee compliance with positions on legislation. For those SDVAs that are non-profits, you are expressly permitted by law to engage in advocacy on issues related to your funding. You may not spend more than 20% of your revenue in any fiscal year on such advocacy, and you may not spend ANY state or federal grant money on your legislative advocacy.
- **How can I stay informed about what is happening with the budget, the legislation, and the future of my grant funding?**
 - We will continue to update the information on our web-site (www.vsdvalliance.org): visit that regularly for updates. We are also sharing our activities on twitter—sign up through the link on our web-site or follow #closethegap. SDVA Directors will have an opportunity to ask questions at our upcoming monthly Directors' call and at a special Directors' Forum being organized by your colleagues for the afternoon prior to Legislative Advocacy Day. And please remember, both Kristine and I welcome your calls at any time! ([804/377-0335](tel:8043770335)) We are absolutely committed to meeting the two simple goals that you established as we traveled all around the state listening to your concerns: substantially increasing the dollars that are available for both prevention and intervention services and reducing both the dollars and time that are being spent on administration. We trust that you are committed as well and we look forward to hearing from you and seeing you soon!

In Peace,
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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. We enhance response and prevention efforts through training, public policy advocacy, public awareness programs, and technical assistance to professionals.

The Action Alliance represents 53 Sexual and Domestic Violence agencies (SDVAs) in the Commonwealth. These SDVAs provide a variety of victims' services in their community including 24-hour hotlines, emergency shelters, accompaniment to hospitals, trauma counseling, community education and prevention services.

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