



THE NEED FOR SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN VIRGINIA

Virginia has been using federal grant dollars to invest in a small number of evidence-informed sexual and domestic violence prevention programs for more than 15 years. These programs use best practices in public health to not only reduce risks, but to build protective factors and resilience for all young people, in order to prevent violence before it can occur.

Given the limited availability of federal funds, only 16 out of Virginia's 65 sexual and domestic violence agencies are currently able to engage in prevention work in their communities. This is not enough to sustain or expand vital sexual and domestic violence prevention programming across the state. In a recent survey of agencies, many reported that they do not have a full-time prevention staff member and that they would need between 51-75k per year to support a dedicated position in the community.

WHAT A PREVENTION PROGRAM LOOKS LIKE

Prevention staff in local agencies coordinate a variety of evidence-informed, public health strategies aimed at changing behavior, supporting healthy norms, and reducing the likelihood that sexual and domestic violence perpetration or victimization will ever occur in communities. These strategies include:

- ✓ Ongoing school-based and after-school education **teaching young people the skills required to build healthy relationships;**
- ✓ **Education for parents and families** – in coordination with Community Services Boards, in-home visitors, and allied professionals – to foster positive parent-child attachment, support developmentally appropriate communication and expression in youth, and build social-emotional learning skills;
- ✓ **Training and tools for school administrators, faith leaders, and peers on ways to create healthy, violence-free environments** - including recognizing and responding to harmful behaviors that may be risk factors for future violence;
- ✓ **The coordination of multi-disciplinary community coalitions** that address issues like VA Family-life Education (FLE) instruction, trauma-informed service provision, and community safety and cohesion.

Programs like these are the cornerstones for ensuring community-wide health and resilience—a key factor in preventing future violence. **It is time for Virginia to invest in a robust and effective sexual and domestic violence prevention infrastructure.** Preventing sexual and domestic violence is a necessary investment now and for our future.



WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR?

1. **Legislation (SB 297, Favola and McClellan, and HB 1015, Herring) to establish the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Prevention Program** under the Secretary of Health and Human Resources – Department of Social Services - to provide leadership and funding to prevent sexual and domestic violence.
2. **\$5,000,000 in funding in state budget** – generated from TANF, General Funds, and General Assembly Appropriations - for awarding grants to local sexual and domestic violence agencies engaged in evidence-informed sexual and domestic violence prevention work. No more than 15% of the overall fund shall be retained for statewide training and resources to support effective, evidence-informed strategies and evaluation of those efforts in order to continuously improve outcomes and grants administration of the **Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Prevention Grant Fund**.

- a) **At the Virginia Department of Health**, up to 5% of overall fund retained to support a position to serve on a collaborative statewide Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Prevention Team (with VDSS and the Action Alliance) and to administer program **grants to support evidence-informed sexual violence primary prevention** in local agencies dedicated to addressing sexual violence in their communities.
- b) **At the Virginia Department of Social Services**, up to 5% of overall fund retained to support a position to serve on a collaborative statewide Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Prevention Team (with VDH and the Action Alliance) and to administer program **grants to support evidence-informed domestic violence primary prevention** in local agencies dedicated to addressing dating and domestic violence in their communities.
- c) **At the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance**, up to 5% of overall fund retained for coordination of a collaborative statewide Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Prevention Team (with VDH and VDSS), the delivery of **training and technical assistance to sexual and domestic violence agencies engaged in prevention** programming, and the development of **statewide strategies** designed to reinforce and expand the impact of prevention work taking place in local communities.