



Policy Brief

Securing Adequate Funding for Domestic Abuse Violence Services in Wisconsin

*Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse
Approved July 10, 2024*

I. Executive Summary

The policy brief "Securing Adequate Funding for Domestic Violence Services in Wisconsin" aims to address the critical issue of domestic violence in the state, underscoring the necessity of a substantial financial commitment of at least \$657 million. This allocation is vital in confronting the alarming increase in domestic violence incidents, as detailed in the 2022 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report, and in mitigating the extensive economic losses associated with these incidents, estimated at \$657 million annually.

Key Points:

1. **Magnitude of Domestic Violence in Wisconsin:** The report highlights the pervasive nature of domestic violence across Wisconsin, affecting a significant portion of the population, regardless of age, gender, or location, and leading to severe physical, psychological, and economic consequences.
2. **Economic Impact:** The economic toll of domestic violence encompasses direct costs such as medical care and legal services, as well as indirect costs such as lost productivity and reduced quality of life. Addressing these costs is crucial for the state's economic health.
3. **Current Service Landscape:** Wisconsin's network of over 70 domestic violence service providers offers crucial support but faces challenges due to unpredictable and insufficient funding, leading to service gaps.
4. **Strategic Allocation of Funds:** The proposed \$657 million budget aims to:
 - Enhance existing service providers, expanding emergency shelters, legal, counseling, and support services.
 - Invest in prevention and early intervention.
 - Strengthen stakeholder collaboration and data collection.
 - Allocate funds for direct payments to survivors, innovative approaches, and pilot programs.

5. **Prioritization and Impact:** Prioritizing existing service providers is crucial for immediate impact, followed by prevention and early intervention, stakeholder collaboration, and innovation.

The brief concludes with an urgent call to action, emphasizing that the proposed budget represents not just a financial allocation but a commitment to the safety, dignity, and healing of every individual affected by domestic violence in Wisconsin. It is an investment in the state's future, ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all its residents. The allocation table provides a clear roadmap for utilizing the funds, ensuring impactful and efficient use of resources in addressing this pressing issue.

II. Introduction

Domestic violence remains a significant issue affecting individuals, families, and communities across the state. According to the End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, 36.3% of Wisconsin women and 32.1% of Wisconsin men experience intimate partner physical violence in their lifetimes¹. The adverse effects of domestic violence include physical and psychological harm, increased healthcare costs, and the disruption of social networks and community stability².

A recent study conducted by the Sojourner Family Peace Center and The Jamie Kimble Foundation for Courage estimated the annual economic losses associated with domestic violence in Wisconsin to be \$657 million, with costs expected to rise³. These losses stem from direct costs, such as medical care and legal services, and indirect costs, including lost productivity and reduced quality of life^{3,4}. Addressing the economic impact of domestic violence is essential to the state's overall economic health and stability.

Adequate funding for domestic violence victim services is crucial for providing necessary support and resources to individuals and families affected by domestic violence. Stable and sufficient funding is necessary for maintaining effective and sustainable programs and ensuring that service providers can consistently offer programming and support to those in need⁵. By allocating no less than \$657 million in the state budget for domestic violence services, Wisconsin can help address the economic losses associated with this issue and guarantee comprehensive support for victims throughout the state.

It is imperative to acknowledge the grave situation highlighted in the 2022 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report⁶. This comprehensive report unveils alarming statistics and insights: Wisconsin witnessed 96 domestic violence-related deaths in 2022, averaging about one death every 3.8 days. A total of 73 domestic violence homicide incidents were recorded, with the majority of perpetrators being male (88.7%) and firearms being the most prevalent means of perpetration (88.5% of cases). These incidents spanned 25 counties, evenly distributed between rural and urban settings. Victims varied in age from 20 months to 92 years, with the average age being 37 years, while perpetrator ages ranged from 17 to 79 years.

The report⁶ also underscores significant risk factors such as threats with weapons, stalking, and strangulation, pointing to a deep-rooted issue that transcends

geographical and demographic boundaries. It also situates these findings within a broader context, noting a global and national trend in domestic violence, and highlights persisting disparities among different populations. These alarming statistics and insights necessitate a substantial investment in domestic violence services.

The proposed allocation of no less than \$657 million in the state budget aims to address these challenges comprehensively. This investment will bolster support and resources for victims, fund prevention and early intervention, and enhance collaboration among stakeholders, aligning with the report's key recommendations and the overarching goal of reducing domestic violence in Wisconsin.

III. The Economic Cost of Domestic Violence in Wisconsin

Domestic violence carries significant economic costs, which can be divided into direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include expenses associated with medical care, legal services, and other support services⁷. Indirect costs refer to the impacts of domestic violence on lost productivity, reduced quality of life, and the long-term well-being of individuals and families⁸. Economic losses due to domestic violence in Wisconsin are projected to increase, emphasizing the need for timely intervention and effective domestic violence services⁹. As the population grows and societal factors evolve, it is crucial to invest in prevention, early intervention, and support services to mitigate these losses and promote a safer, healthier state¹⁰.

To address the economic costs of domestic violence and protect the well-being of residents, it is imperative that Wisconsin invests in effective and comprehensive domestic violence services¹¹. These services not only provide immediate relief and safety for victims but also contribute to reducing the long-term economic consequences of domestic violence. By allocating no less than \$657 million in the state budget for domestic violence services, Wisconsin can ensure adequate support for victims and work towards reducing the prevalence and impact of this critical issue.

IV. The Current Landscape of Domestic Violence Services and Funding

In Wisconsin, a robust network of over 70 domestic violence and sexual assault (DV/SA) service providers is strategically distributed across each county, ensuring accessible support for victims and their families (Figure 1). This comprehensive system offers vital services such as emergency shelters, housing programs, counseling, legal assistance, and support groups. It is important to acknowledge that this count, derived from the End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin member program list, may not fully represent the scope of services, especially considering smaller, community-based initiatives that operate without significant state or federal funding. While these organizations play a crucial role in addressing the needs of domestic violence victims, their capacity to serve is often limited due to resource constraints and increasing demand¹².

Domestic violence services in Wisconsin rely on a combination of federal, state, and local funding sources, as well as private donations from Foundations and individuals, fundraisers and grants. However, these funding streams are often unpredictable and insufficient to meet the growing need for services. This uncertainty

V. Recommendations for Allocating At Least \$657 Million in the State Budget

Considering the grave situation highlighted in the 2022 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report and the current landscape of domestic violence services and funding, the following recommendations are proposed for the allocation of at least \$657 million in the state budget:

A. Increase Funding for Existing Domestic Violence Service Providers

1. Expand capacity to adequately staff and improve conditions for emergency shelters and housing programs to meet the growing demand for safe spaces for victims and their families.
2. Enhance legal, counseling, and support services to address the diverse and complex needs of domestic violence victims and promote their recovery and empowerment.
3. Allocate additional funding for smaller, community-based initiatives that operate without significant state or federal funding, as they are integral in addressing domestic violence in more localized settings.
4. Invest in and expand existing community-based education and awareness campaigns to raise public understanding of domestic violence and promote a culture of nonviolence.

B. Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention Programs

1. Invest in primary prevention initiatives that address violence at its root causes, especially those focused on youth.
2. Implement targeted initiatives focusing on the reduction of firearm-related domestic violence incidents, reflecting the report's findings on the prevalent use of firearms.

C. Strengthen Collaboration and Coordination Among Stakeholders

1. Enhance data collection and reporting on domestic violence incidence and service outcomes to inform policy decisions and track progress in addressing the issue.
2. Develop specialized interventions and support services for demographics most at risk, as identified in the report, including initiatives tailored to rural and urban settings.

D. Allocate Funds for Direct Payments to Survivors, Innovative Approaches, and Pilot Programs

1. Provide emergency funds for survivors to meet daily needs and avoid financial dependence on perpetrators.
2. Test new service delivery models and evaluate their effectiveness in meeting the needs of domestic violence victims, with a focus on addressing gaps and barriers in current services.
3. Allocate funds exclusively to measure impact, as limited programmatic funding often hampers administrative capacity to track progress and make effective arguments for continued programming.

4. Encourage public-private partnerships to leverage additional resources, foster innovation, and expand the reach and impact of domestic violence services.
5. Support initiatives addressing the interconnectedness of homicidality and suicidality in domestic violence cases, as highlighted in the report.

VI. Conclusion

As we conclude this policy brief, it is crucial to emphasize the prioritization of our recommendations for allocating at least \$657 million in the state budget for domestic violence services in Wisconsin. The gravity of the situation, as highlighted in the 2022 Wisconsin Domestic Violence Homicide Report, calls for a strategic and impactful response.

Firstly, the highest priority should be given to **increasing funding for existing domestic violence service providers**. This is critical because it directly enhances the capacity of emergency shelters, counseling, legal assistance, housing support programs and support services. These are the front-line services that provide immediate safety and support to victims. Enhancing these services will have an immediate and tangible impact on the lives of those affected by domestic violence. Also included is funding for existing community-based community education and awareness campaigns that raise awareness about services and promote a culture of nonviolence.

Secondly, **investing in prevention and early intervention programs** should be ranked next. Prevention is key to reducing the incidence of domestic violence over the long term. By investing in primary prevention, we can change societal attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate violence, thereby preventing many cases of domestic violence before they occur.

The third priority is **strengthening collaboration and coordination among stakeholders**. This approach ensures that services are delivered efficiently and effectively and that best practices are shared across the network of service providers. Enhanced data collection and reporting will also provide the evidence base required to inform policy decisions and adapt strategies over time.

Finally, **allocating funds for emergency financial assistance for survivors, innovative approaches, and pilot programs** should be prioritized. While this is the last in our list of priorities, it is by no means the least important. Innovation is crucial for addressing the gaps in current services and for developing new strategies to support victims more effectively.

In pledging to meet the needs of victims in Wisconsin, we recognize that these priorities are not just lines in a budget; they represent a commitment to the safety, dignity, and healing of every individual affected by domestic violence in our state. We are committed to a future where domestic violence is a relic of the past, and where every person in Wisconsin can live in safety and with respect. To this end, we urge the governor, senators, and representatives to allocate no less than \$657 million in the state budget for domestic violence services. This is not just an investment in services; it is an investment in the health and wellbeing of our communities, in the strength of our families, and in the future of our state. Together, we can make Wisconsin a safe haven for all, free from the scourge of domestic violence.

Based on the prioritization outlined in the conclusion, the requested budget for domestic violence services in Wisconsin can be allocated as follows (Table 1). The total budget is \$657 million, and this will be distributed across the various recommended categories:

**Table 1:
Budget Allocation for Domestic Violence Services in Wisconsin (in millions US\$)**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Allocation (in millions)</i>	<i>Justification</i>
A. Increase Funding for Existing Service Providers	\$500	
1. Emergency Shelters & Housing Programs		Priority for expanding capacity to meet the growing demand for safe spaces, with a priority on funding for shelters.
2. Legal, Counseling, & Support Services		Essential to enhance services addressing diverse and complex needs of victims.
3. Community-Based Initiatives		Support for smaller initiatives crucial for localized domestic violence solutions.
4. Education and Awareness Campaigns		Vital for raising public understanding and promoting a culture of nonviolence.
B. Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention	\$107	
1. Primary Prevention		Initiatives that address the root causes of violence, specifically with youth.
2. Firearm-Related Violence Reduction Initiatives		Targeting the reduction of prevalent firearm-related domestic incidents.
C. Strengthen Collaboration and Coordination	\$40	
1. Data Collection and Reporting		Enhancing data capabilities to inform policy and track progress.
2. Specialized Interventions for At-Risk Demographics		Development of targeted services for the most vulnerable groups.
D. Direct Payments, Innovative Approaches, and Pilots	\$10	
1. Emergency financial assistance for victims		Providing financial independence and meeting daily needs of survivors.
2. New Service Delivery Models		Testing and evaluating new approaches to service delivery.
3. Impact Measurement Funding		Ensuring the capacity to track program effectiveness and impact.
4. Public-Private Partnerships		Encouraging partnerships for additional resource leverage and innovation.
5. Initiatives on Homicidality and Suicidality		Addressing critical aspects of domestic violence as noted in the report.
Total	\$657	Commitment to the comprehensive support of domestic violence victims.

This budget allocation aligns with the priorities set forth in the policy brief, ensuring that the most urgent and impactful areas receive the highest funding. The emphasis is on enhancing existing service providers, followed by prevention and early intervention, stakeholder collaboration, and innovative approaches, in that order. The allocation amounts are determined based on the importance and immediate impact potential of each category.

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