



To encourage and facilitate mutual support, peer enrichment, awareness, and collaboration among states and territories administering STOP Violence Against Women Act Formula Grant Program.

---

## ***AVA Board President's Annual Report***

June 2025

Under the current bylaws, the President for the Association of VAWA Administrators (AVA) shall submit a “report at the Annual meeting on all matters of interest to AVA.” The following report covers all AVA activities and business issues since our last Annual Membership meeting on June 20, 2024.

### **Organization**

The AVA Board of Directors typically consists of nine members, including four Executive Officers – the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer – as well as several at-large members. In previous years the Board has also included a position for the Immediate Past President (originally added in 2018); although that specific position currently is vacant.

In 2019, the AVA membership voted to change the AVA Bylaws to reflect that a term of service on the Board of Directors shall be two years from the time of election. No elected Board member may serve for more than four full (two-year) consecutive terms. This change ensures that our organization maintains capacity and a strong leadership to meet the responsibilities that are outlined in our mission.

Every year, the Association membership elects individuals to fill any vacancies on the Board during the Annual meeting. Each member state has one ballot and can vote for new members to serve on the 2025-2026 AVA Board. This coming year, we will have four vacancies – with one current board member seeking re-election, and several new VAWA Administrators interested in serving on the Board for the first time. We are always excited to add new members with fresh ideas and perspectives! After Board members are elected for the coming year, the selection of the Board’s Executive Officers and committee assignments will then occur as part of the first official Board meeting.

The AVA Board meetings happen on a monthly basis, typically via conference call. The Executive Director keeps us well informed with email updates on issues affecting VAWA administrators. Board members also have frequent contact throughout the year through telephone and email. The full AVA Board last met in person in October 2024 in Nashville, TN for our strategic planning meeting to discuss our mission and core values as an organization and strategize a plan for the upcoming year

One of the primary purposes of AVA is to bring together VAWA grant administrators from across the country to **collaborate, share knowledge, and exchange best practices**. AVA helps provide access to essential resources that support the effective administration of VAWA grant programs. By fostering a culture of learning and inclusion, we ensure that our members have the tools and support they need to thrive in their roles.

### **Peer-to-Peer Support and Networking Opportunities**

AVA recognizes the importance of providing opportunities for VAWA administrators to connect with their fellow peers to share challenges, solutions, and best practices in a collaborative and supportive environment. A few of

the ways AVA accomplished that is through the planning of annual in-person Peer to Peer Meetings, as well as scheduling monthly AVA Connect Calls.

- AVA Peer to Peer Meetings

AVA Peer to Peer meetings typically provide a great opportunity for VAWA Administrators to meet, discuss many important issues, ask questions, and share concerns; but more importantly there is the added value of meeting in person and having the chance to network and build relationships. The most recent P2P meetings were held (with 20 participants) in Madison, WI in June 2024 just prior to the start of the FY2025. AVA originally planned to schedule another Peer to Peer meeting in the Spring of 2025 with a tentative location of Florida, but unfortunately, due to uncertainty around whether participants would have access to the necessary funds to attend it was determined the best course of action was to postpone the event until Fall of 2025. We are excited to host an in-person Peer to Peer meeting again soon and more details will definitely be forthcoming about the next upcoming event!

- AVA Connect Calls for VAWA Administrators

This past year AVA scheduled quarterly AVA Connect Calls for the remainder of the 2024 calendar year, and then increased the frequency of those calls to monthly beginning in January of 2025. Similar to the Peer to Peer meetings, the AVA Connect Calls are designed to allow VAWA Administrators the opportunity to meet virtually on a regular basis and provide an outlet to discuss many important issues, ask questions, and share concerns. It is always helpful to hear how other states and territories address different challenges, and learn from others about what works best, what does not work, and what we can focus on doing better. These virtual get-togethers also provide informal opportunities for administrators to stay socially connected with each other as peers in a meaningful way.

Going forward, AVA will seek to continue providing both of these platforms – Peer to Peer Meetings and AVA Connect Calls – for VAWA Administrators to come together to share ideas and connect on a regular basis.

### **Communications, Information Gathering and Resource Sharing**

The Association also continues to help facilitate ongoing communication and encourages the sharing of information and resources to assist VAWA Administrators and staff in the day-to-day management and administration of their STOP formula grant funds. Below are just a few of the ways in which AVA has, and continues to provide vital information:

- Executive Director of AVA: The Association provides a centralized point of contact, Arlene Vassell (our current AVA Executive Director) for all AVA Members, non-members, and national partners. Communication can range from researching specific questions, connecting administrators that may share a common interest, discussion of challenges and successes, and/or collaborating with national partners on issues related to VAWA.
- Listserv: For several years, AVA has utilized an electronic mailing list software application or email listserv that is open to all administrators, managers, and staff of the designated VAWA administrative agencies nationwide. The AVA Executive Director is the moderator of the listserv and can share the activities from the past year in the ED Report. The list serve is utilized as a discussion group to encourage dialogue among subscribers who can discuss various topics, post and/or reply to questions, or to seek advice from other colleagues.
- Website: The AVA Website continues to be a very valuable, yet under-utilized resource that we encourage all VAWA Administrators to take advantage of and visit often. The website contains many useful tools, as well as updates regarding important news and upcoming events. In addition, the Member Resources Library offers practical resources and examples to assist VAWA Administrators and their staff in fulfilling the

responsibilities associated with STOP Formula grant funds. We continue to make enhancements and updates to the website on a regular basis, and always welcome suggestions or feedback about how we can make the website more helpful and user-friendly.

Presently, AVA contracts with Kim Oppelt, a former STOP Administrator from New York, to maintain our website, and keep the information relevant and helpful for VAWA Administrators. Kim serves as the liaison with the web-designers and the Board, and we greatly appreciate all her hard work and dedication!

- Quarterly Meetings with OVW: AVA is committed to representing all VAWA Administrators in our quarterly conversations with OVW and encourages administrators to participate in those conversations by soliciting questions and providing the opportunity to share comments from the field. These regular conversations allow us to get answers directly from OVW about the biggest concerns and challenges that VAWA Administrators face. We value our partnership with OVW, and strive to build a strong, positive relationship that is hopefully beneficial to all administrators.

### **Additional AVA Board Activities Regarding Administration and Oversight of AVA**

- Reviewed our mission, vision, and core values, as well as our annual goals at the most recent strategic planning meeting in Nashville, TN in October 2024.
- Updated and revised the AVA Bylaws (as needed).
- Continued to review the information and organization of the AVA Website.
- Developed a 12-month budget for the upcoming FY 2025-2026.
- Conducted regular monthly AVA Board meetings (as well as additional committee meetings) via conference calls.

### **Executive Director of AVA**

After seven-plus years serving as the AVA Executive Director, Barry Bryant announced his retirement in the summer of 2024. The AVA Board of Directors formed an ad hoc search committee, updated the job description for the Executive Director position, and developed a transition plan. It was certainly a challenging process, but after an extensive search and multiple interviews, we identified Arlene Vassell as the best candidate to provide leadership for AVA going forward. Arlene began serving in her new role as Executive Director in September, 2024 and we were also very fortunate that Barry agreed to serve in an advisory role for a few months to help with the period of transition. Overall, the AVA Board has been very impressed with how quickly she has adapted to her new role and we want to take this opportunity to say thank you to her. Arlene has definitely met/exceeded all of our expectations and done an excellent job in representing the organization. We are excited to work with her going forward as she brings a new vision, passion and energy to the Association, and we definitely look forward to seeing what the future holds for AVA!

### **AVA Board Members**

The AVA Annual Meeting also provides an opportunity for me to recognize and personally thank each of the current AVA Board members for their continued dedication, leadership, and hard work. They have diligently been working on behalf of VAWA Administrators and AVA over the past year, and most have gone above and beyond their normal day-to-day job duties as VAWA Administrators. It is a privilege to serve alongside such a fine group of individuals and I value the friendships that have been developed along the way!

### **AVA Members**

Finally, I also want to thank each and every one of you, our current members (or potential future members). Some of the biggest challenges that VAWA Administrators have faced over the past year include navigating all

the important changes that have occurred recently on the federal level (including many of the new executive orders), as a result of the new presidential administration. Still, amidst all the chaos and uncertainty, you continue to exhibit the same level of passion, dedication and professionalism, and you are all much appreciated!

In closing, please know that AVA and the AVA Board will always strive to continue providing the necessary support and resources to help meet our membership needs. We value your input and participation. Please do not hesitate to share with us any information about issues that you are facing as VAWA Administrators, as well as any other items we should consider for future planning. We want to hear from you!

We also want encourage each state to continue your commitment to AVA by either continuing your current membership with AVA or perhaps by joining AVA for the first time. Membership forms for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025) will be mailed to each state/territory during the first week of July and are also available upon request.

The AVA Board and staff are looking forward to a year of continued success with our AVA membership family!

Respectfully submitted,

*Mark Hertweck*

Mark Hertweck

AVA Board President