

To encourage and facilitate mutual support, awareness and cooperation among

states and territories administering Violence Against Women Act formula grants.

**AVA Connect Conversation   
November 17th, 2020  
3:00PM EST**

**OVERVIEW**AVA conducted our 5th AVA Connect conversation on November 17th, 2020. The intent of our conversations is to create informal opportunities to stay socially connected with each other as peers in a meaningful way.  A key part of AVA Connect is giving you the opportunity to talk about whatever is most on your mind, ask questions and share ideas.  We want to create that round-table space, where we might sit down and have a cup of hotel coffee and muffins and check in with each other.   
 **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**VAWA administrators from 8 states met for our fourth AVA Connect conversation. We agreed in advance to attempt to limit the call to one hour. AVA’s Secretary, Nakia Harris, started the meeting with a quick welcome and overview and then encouraged everyone else on the call to introduce themselves and share how long they have been in their current VAWA Administrator role.   
  
After the introductions, participants then began to discuss any issue that they had concerns about or simply wanted to learn how other administrators are addressing an issue/challenge.   
  
All of the conversation was particularly useful and timely. It was more of a sharing of ideas, experiences, and concerns. Some of the topics of discussion included:

* A recent press release from NAVAA regarding the Senate Committee on Appropriations Releasing FY21 funding measures and subcommittee allocations. (Copy included with this post)
  + The Commerce, Justice and Science and related agencies (CJS) bill includes a FY2021 VOCA cap of $1.5 billion.
    - This allocation represents a 43% reduction in VOCA funding from FY2020 level.
    - Potentially an incredibly significant impact on both VOCA and VAWA funded programs.
    - NAVAA continues to work with congressional staffers and this is just a first draft appropriation at this time
* DV and SA hotline challenges
  + How to address the impact that COVID is having on victims who may not be able to call
  + Are states using any kind of text or chat line to provide additional support services?
  + Hotlines are overwhelmed due to COVID and stay at home orders
  + Increase suicide rates

* The impact of COVID-19 on VAWA Administrators’ professional and personal life
  + Administrators are working with subgrantees to address challenges associated with victims needing shelter who are COVID positive
    - Finding housing
    - Finding emergency shelter/hotels
  + Most administrators continue to work primarily from home and in some cases, their management was not initially in favor of this.
  + Some states that manage both VOCA and VAWA are seeing the VOCA Compensation staff needing to work in the office to process claim forms that are mailed in.
  + Technology challenges
* Discussion about VAWA funded programs within Law Enforcement and their capacity to address cold-case rape cases where victims (under 11 at the time of offense) are not eligible to receive services
  + Rape crisis centers can however, provide counseling services to an adult for trauma that stems from an incident that happened as a child.
* Administrators interested in Peer mentoring offered by AVA

We encourage you to participate in one of the upcoming AVA Connect conversations if you think you might find it useful. Our plan is to hold our next AVA Connect conversation sometime in January of 2021 and we will make sure that you hear about the date and time in the near future.

Take care and thank you for all that you do!