



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

*A NATIONAL VOICE FOR STATE
AND LOCAL ADVOCATES DEDICATED
TO ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE.*

October 4, 2013

NAESV Statement on Government Shutdown

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NAESV Calls on Congress to Immediately Fund the Federal Government

The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) is the voice in Washington for state coalitions and local programs working to end sexual violence and support survivors. NAESV calls on Congress to immediately find a path forward to fund the federal government. Over 1300 rape crisis centers rely on federal funding to support victims and prevent rape through the Victims of Crime Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and the Rape Prevention Education Program.

Advocates at rape crisis centers provide the nation's frontline response to sexual assault at no cost to victims: meeting victims at emergency rooms at all hours; answering 24 hour hotlines; providing crisis intervention; running support groups for both recent victims and survivors of childhood abuse; mentoring volunteers; and providing awareness and prevention programs to their communities. Many rape crisis centers serve broad geographic areas or dense population centers.

“If Congress does not end the shutdown very soon, rape crisis centers will not be able to pay advocates or keep their doors open as the ability to draw down federal funds ceases. Women, men, boys and girls who will tragically experience rape in the coming weeks will not have an advocate available to them, counseling sessions for survivors in crisis will be canceled, and prevention programs at high schools will end,” said NAESV President Monika Johnson-Hostler.

Advocates provide essential support to victims of sexual violence. A 2006 study found that when victims receive advocate-assisted services following assaults, they receive more helpful information, referrals, and services and experience less secondary trauma or re-victimization by medical and legal systems. Furthermore, the same study found that when advocates are present in the legal and medical proceedings following rape, victims fare better in both the short- and long-

term, experiencing less psychological distress, physical health struggles, sexual risk-taking behaviors, self-blame, guilt, and depression.

Before the shutdown, rape crisis centers were already reeling from budget cuts and sequestration. According to a 2013 survey of rape crisis centers conducted by NAESV, half of programs had reduced staff, one-third of programs had a waiting list for basic services, and several programs had closed.

We owe it to victims of sexual violence, who have survived such an intimate and devastating violation, to make sure the funding is available to support them in their time of crisis. Congress must act to prevent an even worse nightmare for victims—the lack of services and support from local rape crisis centers.