

# 2023-29 Long Range Plan:

## Addressing Sexual and Domestic Violence in Wisconsin



# Who are the Coalitions?



**American Indians Against Abuse (AIAA)** is a tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalition serving the eleven federally recognized tribal governments, service providers, and programs in Wisconsin with support and technical assistance to strengthen the response to victims of abuse in our communities. AIAA provides domestic violence and sexual assault advocacy training, awareness, and collaborations designed to be reflective of and have relevance to our local, regional, and national indigenous people and culture.



At **Black and Brown Womyn Power Coalition, Inc., (BBWPC)** our mission is to build the capacities of Black and Brown advocates and their communities to end violence against womyn, queer and trans folx, and young people. We envision a bold healthy community led by liberated and powerful Black, Brown, womyn, queer and trans folx, and young people. Our Core Guiding Values are informed by life-long advocates working to end gender-based violence with a belief that those most impacted should lead the work.



**End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (End Abuse)** is a statewide, non-profit, membership organization of domestic violence victims, survivors, programs, allied partners, and supporting individuals. We promote social change that transforms societal attitudes, practices, and policies to prevent and eliminate domestic violence, and oppression. End Abuse WI takes an intersectional approach to understanding and addressing the root causes of racial, gendered, economic, and all other forms of oppression in the fight for equity and to end abuse.



**Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA)** is a statewide coalition and membership agency guided by a mission to create social change to end sexual violence. WCASA provides a statewide infrastructure for sexual assault services and prevention, in collaboration with local, state, and national partners. Our vision is a world without violence, oppression, and racism where all people honor bodily autonomy and social justice. Our work is grounded in our foundation that to end SV, we must also end all forms of oppression

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# Introduction

A long range plan (LRP) offers an opportunity for programs to reflect on the current state of the movement and lay out a clear vision for the future. Through this plan's development, Wisconsin domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) programs reflected on historical trends, identified present needs, and engaged with emerging ideas and practices in order to determine the direction of future anti-violence work. The plan's impact ranges from funding and public policy, to how leaders and stakeholders within the movement understand the anti-violence landscape. It is intended to help all involved focus on priorities for services to address DV and SA as we collectively imagine and co-create violence-free futures.

Wisconsin DV advocacy programs and stakeholders have conducted LRPs on a six-year basis, most recently in the [2014-2020 Long Range Plan for a Safe Wisconsin](#). As part of this process, recommendations related to funding and policy priorities for the DV field were solicited from statewide and local advocacy programs and stakeholders. This has allowed those working in the field – guided by the identified needs of survivors – to inform DV work across Wisconsin.

Historically, SA programs were left out of the process. Instead, with both End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (End Abuse) and the Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse focusing on funding and public policy, the focus of previous plans was on funding priorities for DV work. In the current plan, we mark a needed change from this exclusion. As a result, the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) was included in the creation of this 2023-2029 LRP, which is ultimately intended to guide statewide anti-violence advocacy relating to DV, SA, and the many overlapping aspects of these forms of violence.

This plan is also influenced by the state of the anti-violence movements. While this work began and was led by Black and Indigenous women, the modern anti-violence movement has long pushed out Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC), and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Two Spirit (LGBTQ2S) individuals, impacting not only survivors, but also advocates. This plan also comes at a time of heightened awareness of the intersection of racism and interpersonal violence. In 2020, End Abuse and WCASA joined a national movement of DV and SA coalitions called **The Moment of Truth**. This long overdue statement acknowledges how white leadership in this movement has failed BIPOC survivors, leaders, and organizations. Beyond just a statement, it has served guidepost for our work and this plan.

## Process & Timeline

In August of 2019, representatives from End Abuse, WCASA, American Indian's Against Abuse (AIAA), Black and Brown Womyn Power Coalition (BBWPC), the WI Department of Justice (DOJ), the WI Department of Children and Families (DCF), the WI Department of Health Services (DHS), and the WI Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse – were charged with the following:

**1. Identify strategies to get input from a wide range of individuals and programs as to the most important priorities for services to address DV and SA.**

**2. Distill and interpret the information to translate it to a broad set of priorities or themes for the LRP.**

The first step in the above-named charge included identifying representatives to join the LRP Committee. Those involved embraced that in order **for this process to be successful, the voices of member DV and SA programs needed to be centered.** A list of individuals and programs can be found at the end of the document.

During the first LRP Meeting in August of 2019, in addition to the above-named charge, we collectively identified the following objectives:

- To begin our work with self-reflection and recognition of the devastating harm of cultural silence and ignorance
- To empower advocates, individuals, and communities to have a more historical, inclusive, and equitable response to those who have experienced violence
- To center survivors and advocates who identify with communities that have experienced trauma, discrimination, inequity, and oppression
- To clarify and fully respond to the particular needs of victims of SA and DV
- To resource and support prevention efforts that are framed and analyzed with an understanding of these objectives

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the in-person planning process, which had a significant impact on survivors and service providers across the state. While initially delaying the process, the decision was made to move forward. Plans for in-person strategies to collect data and feedback had to be adjusted and workgroups were tasked with finding creative ways to get input on the needs of survivors and their families.

In October of 2020, the LRP Team reconvened virtually to revitalize the work and came up with a plan to hold input sessions over the next several months with directors and advocates from member programs throughout the state. **These virtual sessions included the following focused questions:**

- **What are the changes, trends, paradigms, and approaches emerging in the field of DV and SA?**
- **What innovative approaches would create a Wisconsin that centers the strength of survivors and supports their liberation?**

In 2022, End Abuse and WCASA came together to refocus on the charge, specifically to distill and interpret the information for the development of a LRP. Staff revisited all the data collected throughout the planning process to identify priorities.

Throughout this process, **three concepts continued to emerge as priorities:** focus on transformative justice, as we divest from criminal legal system responses; center the experiences of those most impacted by violence, specifically BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities; and prioritize SA, to meet the distinct needs of survivors by addressing the disparity in funding and focus.

In addition to distilling all of the feedback, our charge centered in these areas. This intentional and collaborative process led to the development of this plan, which would not have been possible without the feedback from stakeholders from across the state.

# A note on funding:

It is important to note that the plan has been developed over many years and is now being released during a funding crisis. The critical federal funding sources programs rely upon for DV and SA services have been drastically cut. Programs expect reductions in Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding over the next few years, which could have devastating consequences in Wisconsin.

The impacts could be particularly harmful for SA services, which are funded at significantly lower levels when compared to DV services. When given the choice of funding DV or SA, dual programs commonly prioritize DV.

Funding challenges also exist at the state level, related to DCF Basic Services Grant. In 2022, DCF made a change to the Basic Services Grant funding stream by switching from a guaranteed funding allocation to a competitive process. Many mainstream DV programs reliably received this funding without competing with other programs in a typical grant process. Relatively newer and often culturally specific programs did not receive this funding.

Switching to a competitive grant process meant that all programs in Wisconsin were able to apply for the Basic Services Grant for the first time. This rebalance was long due; however, the total funding distribution for programs did not change. These events further highlight what we've known for decades in this movement: there is not enough funding to meet the basic needs of DV and SA survivors in Wisconsin.



# Input from DV & SA Service Providers

As discussed above, the process for creating this LRP solicited input from individuals and programs from across the state. This information is included below not only to honor the work of those who provided that feedback, but also to serve as a foundation for the interpretations and recommendations laid out later in the plan. We have included quotes from DV & SA advocates who were part of this input-gathering process, offering reflection from essential participants in the formation of this LRP.

**What are the changes, trends, paradigms, and approaches emerging in the field of DV and SA?**

## On the Horizon:

*Which new ideas are pushing/needing to become accepted trends and practices?*

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- Elevation of culturally specific programs led by BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ folks
- Culturally specific programs doing SA work
- Supportive services for harm-doers and the entire family unit when appropriate
- Rethinking the role of law enforcement
- Working with and paying youth
- Teaching culture and primary prevention efforts

**"We are so focused on safety. I appreciate thinking about liberation."  
- WI victim advocate**

## Emerging

“Increasing sexual assault funding is crucial to serve BIPOC and all cultural communities in Wisconsin. We need a better understanding of the sexual assault dynamics in the field and across the board.” - WI victim advocate

*Which trends and practices are picking up momentum and acceptance?*

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- Gender inclusive services
- Increased willingness to address white supremacy
- Youth becoming leaders and learning how to do the work
- Mobile advocacy, street outreach, and varying office hours
- Funding support for BIPOC and culturally specific programs
- Providing survivors other alternatives than the criminal legal system

## Established

*Which trends and practices are mainstream or standard operating procedures?*

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- Pay and benefits for advocates is not equitable
- Funding streams dictate the focus of programming needs
- The leadership in DV-SA programs is primarily white
- Almost all of funding is only for direct services and crisis intervention rather than prevention

## Disappearing/Trough:

*Which trends and practices are concepts whose viability is no longer needed?*

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- Law enforcement solving all the problems
- Oppressive and harmful vocabulary and terms
- The belief that victims always leave
- Screening people out of services; thinking that there are some people we cannot serve

## Undertow:

*What are the deep patterns/ways that may cause trouble/inhibit progress?*

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- Housing instability and economic insecurity
- Systemic racism and white supremacy
- Non-profits rely heavily on rigid and restrictive government funding
- Over-reliance on the criminal legal system

## Implications and Opportunities

- We need to go beyond emergency shelters and crisis intervention
- Believe in the inherent goodness in people and their potential to evolve when given the right resources and networks of support
- Invest in youth leadership as a prevention strategy

**“We need training for agencies and advocates around indigenous tribal laws and codes that affect survivors. These trainings should be Indigenous women/girls/2spirit survivor-led” - WI victim advocate**

## What innovative approaches would create a Wisconsin that centers the strength of survivors and supports their liberation?

*A Wisconsin that centers the strength of survivors and supports their liberation will:*

1. Design the system according to survivor-identified needs
2. Elevate survivor leadership through community generated policies and practices
3. Dismantle and re-create systems through intersectional, radical transformation
4. Grow innovative, linguistically, and culturally-responsive collaborations and reckon with engagement with law enforcement and other power systems
5. Provide equitable, substantial, meaningful, non-restricted, and flexible funding for services, prevention, and for BIPOC
6. Move beyond the binary of victims/abusers to address the root causes and end violence

“...as a non-binary person, I still find the language very much gendered. I’m often misgendered in rooms, and conversations. This work is not always a safe space for trans and gender-non-conforming individuals. I think the work starts in leadership.” - WI victim advocate

## **1. Wisconsin will: Design the system according to survivor-identified needs**

*Ideas generated:*

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- Abolish agency policies that make survivors go through barriers to receiving services
- Increase digital/virtual/mobile advocacy services and other innovative pathways to accessible services
- Integrate and provide funding supports for more holistic approaches to healing, like art and culture
- Recognize the need for dual DV/SA funding supports
- Get feedback from survivors about the experience of the safety and economic security during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Promote the education and transformation of mainstream programs to expand the variety of responses that are available to survivors and to become programs that support the cultures and values of culturally specific programs

## **2. Wisconsin will: Elevate survivor leadership through community generated policies and practices**

*Ideas generated:*

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- Increase funding for survivors to take on leadership roles, including intentional mentorship programs and mentoring
- Hold mainstream DV/SA programs financially and contractually accountable for discrimination against employees and survivors
- Remove barriers to DV/SA funding to make it accessible to all
- Focus on funding to support the services of culturally specific programs
- Create a statewide DV/SA survivor advisory council tasked with providing feedback to state agencies, the Governor, and other entities
- Pay survivors for their time
- Create funding frameworks and opportunities based on the input and feedback from individuals that programs cannot/do not serve

### **3. Wisconsin will: Dismantle and re-create systems through intersectional, radical transformation**

*Ideas generated:*

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- Ensure evaluation frameworks, supportive systems, and funding strategies support anti-oppression practices and strategies
- Support policy change and budget reallocation to provide more funding in the state budget for community-based, culturally-specific programs that provide support to both DV and SA survivors
- Support the leadership of BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ survivors and advocates through targeted funding and support
- Adopt housing first philosophy

### **4. Wisconsin will: Grow innovative, linguistically and culturally-responsive collaborations and reckon with engagement with law enforcement and other power systems**

*Ideas generated:*

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- Re-imagine multi-disciplinary teams to be non-carceral
- Require programs to have materials translated to Spanish and Hmong languages and other languages by trusted, accredited, cultural translators
- Recognize the expertise of and provide resources for programs to access and compensate local community leaders who can help the most while doing the least harm – village Chiefs, Clan Mothers, midwives, grandmas, and aunties.
- Build training pathways, partnerships and paid apprenticeships for community members to build leadership and skills
- Support and incentivize paid training apprenticeships in advocacy programs for BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ survivors to build leadership and skills
- Fund BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ advocates to lead and direct efforts

“Our basic question is how to increase services (and provide the most needed services) for the most marginalized.”

- WI victim advocate

## **5. Wisconsin will: Provide equitable, substantial, meaningful, non-restricted, flexible funding for services, prevention, and for BIPOC**

*Ideas generated:*

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- Fill in the gaps in SANE services. Ensure that a sufficient and diverse population of SANE nurses are available to limit travel for forensic exams
- Provide equitable funding for DV and SA, demonstrated by an initial increase in funding for SA programs
- Increase funding for primary prevention initiatives
- Match requirements for funding are either eliminated or waivable
- More equitable funding for BIPOC and culturally specific programs
- Provide funding and resources for increased compensation to DV/SA advocates
- Provide funding to allow programs to pay a wage differential to bi-lingual advocates for their bi-lingual, bi-cultural skills

“...moving past immediate shelter as a solution, housing first. We have to address housing, basic resources, logistical/economic factors and how they’re impacting victims. Resources should allow them to thrive, which means we have to acknowledge the systems that are negatively impacting the victims.” - WI victim advocate

## 6. Wisconsin will: Move beyond the binary of victims/abusers to address the root causes and end violence

*Ideas generated:*

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- Work with victims and advocates to determine alternative to mandatory arrest policies
- Recognize the saliency of basic human needs in victims' lives and communities and develop and implement policies that address those needs
- Create new funding streams for programs that work with those who cause harm
- Fund and support responses to DV and SA that focus on healing and primary prevention
- Fund and support restorative justice and other community response systems that are outside the criminal legal system
- Focus on and expand the housing first model
- Support the universal basic income model
- Raise the minimum wage
- Expand Medicaid and provide universal health care

“For me, the key insight is that we address the [...] whole family and community with all of our healing awareness; unconditional acceptance of each person fully, bringing community to [an] understanding of root causes of violence, and healing paths to wholeness.” - WI victim advocate



# Interpretations and Context

End Abuse and WCASA staff met throughout 2022 to review the feedback that was obtained from advocates and programs throughout the state. Upon reviewing the data, a series of themes emerged upon which the specific recommendations offered in the LRP are based. We believe that a violence-free future in Wisconsin requires we:

- **Demand Intersectionality in Our Work**
- **Confront Racism and Oppression**
- **Center Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)**
- **Embed Transformative Justice Principles into Systems Work**
- **Prioritize Sexual Assault**
- **Redefine the Role of Advocate**

## A Note

**It would be remiss to suggest that any of the concepts offered as part of this Contextual Framework are new or borne from the authors of this LRP. Black feminists, LGBTQ activists, and BIPOC communities have been calling for and practicing forms of what is offered below for far longer than the current anti-domestic and sexual violence movement. The words of these leaders introduce each section, as a means of recognizing the long history of this work.**

# Demand Intersectionality in Our Work

When Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, she described “the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination ‘intersect’ to create unique dynamics and effects”. Intersectionality challenges us to broaden our focus beyond just DV and SA, to understand the layers of oppression that survivors experience. If we account for only one aspect of identity – such as sex or gender – to inform how a survivor is offered support, we fail to comprehensively address the violence. We also fail to understand the survivor’s experience as it relates to their entire self.

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”  
> Audre Lorde

For our efforts to truly serve all survivors, we must demand intersectionality internally – that is, within all individuals and programs advocating on behalf of survivors. Our demand for intersectionality must also be applied externally, as we interact with legal, governmental, economic, and educational systems which historically have harmed BIPOC communities. Intersectionality will not only enhance services for survivors, but also requires an understanding that solutions to gender-based violence must be multi-faceted and address a variety of social problems that intersect with violence.

Intersectionality necessitates a recognition of root causes of violence. When using the term root causes in this work, we indicate how forces of sexism, racism, classism, colonialism and other forms of oppression are the foundations for allowing a social construction and perpetuation of gender-based violence. Attempting to end DV and SA without addressing root causes is analogous to trying to heal a deep, severe wound with a band-aid: we may be able to stop some bleeding, but ultimately the band-aid is not the solution.

## Applying an Intersectional Lens to Our Work:

- Allows all aspects of survivors' identities to be considered when addressing their experiences
- Accounts for ways advocates may experience oppression in their programs and communities while providing services to survivors
- Enables advocates to identify and address barriers from oppressive systems that impact survivor's daily realities
- Paves the way for a holistic approach to addressing violence that centers the autonomy of survivors to make decisions about their path to justice and healing
- Focuses prevention efforts on root causes of violence by addressing oppression
- Broadens policy advocacy to all areas that intersect with violence and impact survivors

# Confront Racism and Oppression

While intersectionality is a core framework through which our movement must function, we must also understand how it operates in the backdrop of white supremacy. The U.S. was built and continues to function in ways that maintain power for white people, at the expense of BIPOC. White supremacy also permeates our cultural and societal institutions, including those white-led movements that have pushed back against patriarchy and sexism. We must confront all forms of oppression in our work and in our communities if we want to truly address violence.

**“In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist. We must be anti-racist.”**  
> Angela Davis

White feminism, an outgrowth of white supremacy, is defined by Rafia Zakaria as the refusal "to consider the role that whiteness and the racial privilege attached to it have played... in universalizing white feminist concerns, agendas, and beliefs as being those of all feminists." Ignoring the wisdom, lived experiences, and explicit guidance of BIPOC, white feminists perpetuate systems of oppression as they seek to maintain power. Historically, this has included a close alignment with the criminal legal system, both in terms of where funding is located and as a potential solution to DV and SA. This not only limits services for survivors, it creates barriers and causes harm to BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ programs and survivors.

The impact of white supremacy and white feminism are evident in our movement today. The marginalization of BIPOC leaders has led the field to almost exclusively empower cisgender, white women in leadership roles at national, state, and local levels. This leaves BIPOC-led efforts under-funded and often unrecognized for their work and leadership. It also creates an imbalance of power and resources, where funding has historically gone to “mainstream” programs at the expense of culturally specific programs – ultimately harming survivors.

## Confronting Racism & Oppression in Our Work:

- Requires white people to reckon with the history and harm of white supremacy to challenge its ongoing impact
- Elevates BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ leadership and prioritizes culturally specific programs
- Reexamines our relationships with other systems rooted in white supremacy that continue to harm marginalized communities
- Redistributes power to diversify movement leadership
- Embraces gender outside the binary and centers the transgender community

# Center Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

In order to address racism and oppression in our work, we must center the voices and experiences of BIPOC. When we center those most marginalized, not only do we overcome barriers for survivors, we also improve responses for all survivors. BIPOC are disproportionately impacted by SA and DV. This includes facing unique barriers to reporting and seeking services after experiencing violence. Centering BIPOC will also help address racism that is specifically targeted towards Black people, negatively impacting survivors and advocates alike.

*“We know that our efforts will benefit everyone when we center those who are most harmed. When we center Black women, especially dark-skinned, poor, disabled, queer and trans folks, we find liberation for all of us.”*

*> kihana miraya ross*

Anti-Blackness is a targeted form of racism directed at Black people rooted in the U.S. history of slavery. This is the foundation of white supremacy. Although slavery ended 150 years ago in practice, the impact of this mass violence remains present in U.S. social and cultural mindsets, in individuals’ implicit biases, and in formalized structural political and economic power systems. The devastating impacts of anti-Black racism are far reaching, and include disproportionate incarceration rates, adverse health outcomes, and segregation in schools and housing.

The DV and SA movements are not exempt from the legacy and presence of racism and it must meaningfully address its impact in all we do. Many BIPOC-focused programs have been left out of funding opportunities, meaning much of their work has been under or unfunded. Instead, “mainstream” programs have used BIPOC communities to access funding and then failed to meet the needs of these communities. Additionally, BIPOC advocates and leaders continue to experience racism not only in their communities but also in mainstream programs. This has led to the pushout of far too many BIPOC advocates from “mainstream” DV and SA programs. This staff turnover negatively impacts BIPOC survivors. When we center BIPOC survivors, and staff, everyone benefits. Because when we are able to reach those most marginalized, the services for all survivors are enhanced.

## Centering BIPOC - Specifically QTBIPOC Communities & Survivors:

- Requires elevating the needs of BIPOC survivors to better meet the needs of all survivors
- Involves specifically addressing anti-blackness within anti-racism work
- Increases funding levels for BIPOC-focused and led programs
- Supports BIPOC leaders and advocates to ensure they are not pushed out of the movement

# Embed Transformative Justice Principles into Systems Work

Transformative justice recognizes that oppression is at the root of all forms of violence and seeks to address harm, both to the individual and the community at large, outside of the criminal legal system. However, that does not mean there is no accountability for the harm caused. Rather, transformative justice looks for different ways of delivering accountability outside of a system that historically has only dehumanized the individual through punishment. This involves divesting from the criminal legal system, which the vast majority of survivors choose not to engage with, and often re-traumatizes those who do engage with it. It requires us to reckon with our engagement with law enforcement and other power systems, including acting on calls to defund police and invest in community-based safety and support systems of care.

"Even if the criminal punishment system were free of racism, classism, sexism, and other isms, it would not be capable of effectively addressing harm...It does nothing to change a culture that makes this harm imaginable, to hold perpetrators accountable, to support their transformation, or to meet the needs of survivors."

> Mariame Kaba



Our historic reliance on criminal legal responses and solutions has had dire consequences for survivors. Therefore, decriminalizing survival must be central to our work. Survivors of SA and DV, particularly Black women and girls, have been the target of criminal legal responses when defending themselves. The unequal application of self-defense laws result in BIPOC facing criminal liability while white people do not.

Historically the DV/SA movements have disregarded transformative approaches, leaving limited options for healing and accountability. BIPOC communities have developed and implemented restorative responses to violence, while “mainstream” programs have focused solely criminal legal systems. In order to serve all survivors of violence, it is necessary to create models that centers survivor-defined justice and safety outside the criminal legal system.

## Transformative Justice in DV & SA Work

- Recognizes the imbedded racism and oppression in all system responses, particularly the harm caused by the criminal legal system to BIPOC communities
- Prioritizes survivor-defined justice and healing
- Advocates for dismissed charges and the release of all survivors acting in self-defense
- Supports efforts to divest from criminal responses and defund police to return control back to communities to invest in safety and support systems
- Resists efforts that seek to expand the reach of the criminal legal system, including efforts to criminalize abortion, sex work, and other related issues

# Redefine the Role of Advocate

The relationship with systems in DV and SA work goes beyond responses and includes government funding that shapes service delivery. Reliance on this funding limits how services are defined and prioritized, resulting in a prescribed "one size fits all" approach that does not serve all survivors. These limitations may result in survivors, particularly those not in immediate crisis, being turned away or not seeking help in the first place because their circumstances do not fit the crisis-based nature of this work. It also focuses services on engaging with systems when the vast majority of survivors are not interested in engaging in system responses.

**"In today's America, we tend to think of healing as something binary: either we're broken or we're healed from that brokenness. But that's not how healing operates, and it's almost never how human growth works. More often, healing and growth take place on a continuum, with innumerable points between utter brokenness and total health."**  
> Resmaa Menakem

Despite the grassroots origins of the DV and SA movements, these priorities have led to the over-professionalization of our field. Lived experiences as qualification for doing this work have been devalued, instead focusing on education level. This movement began with and should be led by survivors; yet, too often, survivor's voices are left out. The professionalization of the work ultimately inhibit comprehensive approaches to violence prevention, intervention, and healing.

A limited definition of the role of advocacy fails to recognize survivors as experts in their own healing and impedes addressing the complex nature of trauma. Many survivors experience multiple forms of trauma throughout their lives; BIPOC survivors also experience historical trauma. Understanding these experiences is essential to providing supportive services to survivors. It also adds to the complexity of needs that programs must meet. Survivor-defined healing and justice challenges programs to move beyond offering a prescribed list of services; instead, it involves listening to what survivors need.

## Redefining the Role of Advocate

- Requires flexible funding and agency practices to meet the diverse needs of all survivors
- Elevates the survivor as the expert of their healing journey
- Values lived experiences as the qualifications necessary to do this work
- Expands the definition “advocacy” to truly meet survivors where they are at and listens to their needs
- Explores healing and justice outside system responses
- Infuses trauma-informed practices throughout responses – for survivors and staff
- Challenges the narrative of “good” or “worthy” victims in all responses

# Prioritize Sexual Assault

The majority of service providers in the state are dual – in that, they provide services for DV and SA. This model affords programs the ability to avoid duplication of services and collaborate on these issues. While the two are linked by virtue of the fact that both involve the abuse of power by one person over another, there are important differences that have impacted how services are provided to SA survivors. Failure to recognize these differences has negatively impacted SA work and survivors.

“Sexual violence doesn’t discriminate, but the response to it does. In some ways, it is the great equalizer – no demographic or group is exempt – but the reactions to different people telling their stories are far from equal.

>Tarana Burke

There has long existed a gap in distinct SA services at dual programs. While experiences of DV and SA can certainly co-occur, data illustrates that dual programs serve many more DV victims than SA victims. This disparity cannot be explained by a difference in prevalence of these crimes, as studies suggest SA is more prevalent than DV. Therefore, this gap in services is more likely due to vast funding disparities. At the state level, the ratio of DV funding to SA funding is 13.7 million compared to 2.2 million dollars. Additional disparities are mirrored in federal funding levels. These structural barriers have long led SA services to be treated as an “add-on” to DV services, resulting in far fewer SA advocates, less comprehensive SA services, and a lack of organizational infrastructure to support distinct SA services and prevention.

Distinct services for SA are essential due to the complexity of the violence. Many dual programs struggle to reach survivors of SA outside the intimate partner context. Although SA may be used by a partner to exert coercive control, those who perpetrate SA transcend intimate partner relationships. For example, the person causing harm may be an acquaintance, co-worker, fellow student, family member, or a stranger. Additionally, sexual abuse occurs across the lifespan, with some of the highest prevalence rates for children. These factors contribute to the complexity of sexual abuse and require equally complex services.

## Recognize the Distinction between SA and DV Services:

- Requires increasing funding levels for SA services
- Prioritizes SA services in existing funding sources
- Challenges dual programs to focus not only on the link but also the distinction between DV and SA
- Understands the complexity of SA outside of intimate partner relationships and across the lifespan
- Develops distinct SA services to meet the needs of survivors
- Appreciates the concept of body autonomy in SA is connected to reproductive health access and choice

# Priorities and Recommendations

Based on feedback from advocates throughout the state, we offer recommendations in the following priority areas:

- **Services**
- **Culturally-Specific Work**
- **Prevention**
- **Statewide Infrastructure**
- **Systems**
- **Funding**

Sexual and domestic violence are complex issues, requiring similar complexity in approach. Similarly, these fields are evolving, as we strive to adapt and change to the diverse needs of survivors. We are also committed to incorporating input from survivors and feedback from stakeholders. While we've included recommendations at the current time, and we offer this plan through 2029, we will continue to review and revise to ensure it remains relevant in our work.

These recommendations will be used by AIAA, BBWPC, End Abuse and WCASA to inform our work – from public policy to training and technical assistance. We are committed to working with partners at local, state, and national levels to implement these priorities. We also offer recommendations that are applicable to local service providers, communities, and other partners.

# Priority Area 1: Services

## **Expand services beyond the false dichotomy of victim/abuser to include all impacted by harm**

### *Recommendations:*

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- Understand the complexity of violence as it relates to victims/abusers
- Incorporate comprehensive services for families and communities
- Provide treatment and healing services for those who have caused harm
- Offer services for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals

## **Structure services to be survivor-defined and focused on holistic healing**

### *Recommendations:*

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- Enhance survivor defined services that reflect their expertise and autonomy
- Move away from a prescribed list of services to focus on survivor needs
- Address historical and intergenerational trauma
- Recognize victimization across the lifespan
- Expand advocacy beyond criminal, legal, and medical systems
- Remove barriers and create employment opportunities for survivors in our work

## **Remove rigid policies and practices that create barriers to healing and justice:**

### *Recommendations:*

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- Focus on the harm and disproportionate impact of mandated reporting
- Increase mobile services via outreach, varied hours, virtual options, etc.
- Deliver primary services and remove barriers for youth accessing services
- Move beyond shelter practices that impede safety and healing
- Promote long-term, sustainable housing models – like Housing First
- Strengthen sexual assault services within dual agencies
- Collaborate in an intentional, and respectful manner for the benefit of survivors to reduce rather than create barriers.

## Priority Area 2: Culturally-Specific Work

### Prioritize accessibility of linguistically and culturally appropriate services

#### *Recommendations:*

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- Ensure meaningful access to services across all identities – through translated materials, warm referrals, relationships between programs, etc.
- Connect survivors to culturally appropriate healing opportunities
- Design equitable grievance procedures for those experiencing discrimination and harm

### Invest in BIPOC led and culturally specific programs

#### *Recommendations:*

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- Remove existing barriers to funding for culturally specific programs
- Challenge funding structures that prioritize mainstream programs
- Offer substantial, non-restricted, flexible funding for services and prevention
- Support recruitment, retention, and leadership for those most marginalized
- Compensate community leaders for their expertise and leadership

## Priority Area 3: Prevention

### Prioritize primary prevention by focusing on root causes

#### *Recommendations:*

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- Elevate and compensate youth leadership in prevention efforts
- Build on a foundation that understands anti-oppression work as primary prevention
- Encourage best practices in primary prevention that are community-led & driven
- Embrace prevention as essential to our work



## Priority Area 4: Statewide Infrastructure

### Center QTPOC experiences to improve state level infrastructure for all survivors

#### *Recommendations:*

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- Identify ways to incorporate survivor feedback and input
- Examine existing taskforces to coordinate efforts and ensure they center the diverse needs of all survivors
- Advance public policy initiatives based on the LRP and focused on intersectional issues including racial, economic, and reproductive justice
- Foster a movement to end violence through collaboration of the four coalitions (AIAA, BBWP, EA, and WCASA) and primary funders (DCF, DOJ, and DHS)
- DCF and DOJ develop program accountability measures that center the experiences of marginalized communities and individuals

## Priority Area 5: System Work

### Create and expand community responses that center transformative justice

#### *Recommendations:*

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- Explore options for survivors to seek accountability and healing
- Encourage decriminalization efforts – including survival, sex work, and other related offense that harm individuals and communities
- Seek alternatives to criminal legal responses – including mandatory arrest
- Improve responses for survivors who choose to engage with systems
- Re-define multi-disciplinary teams beyond the criminal legal system

# Priority Area 6: Funding

## Increase funding and remove barriers to funding for services

### *Recommendations:*

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- Increase funding for SA through existing grant programs and prioritize SA in discretionary grants
- Increase funding for primary prevention (see Prevention Priority)
- Increase funding for culturally specific work (see Culturally Specific Priority)
- Value those who work in DV-SA by increasing compensation and enhancing retention
- Invest in individual and organizational capacity to support leadership development and improve sustainability
- Advocate for funding processes that ensure equitable access, promote transparency, and eliminate unnecessary barriers (match requirements, reporting, etc.)

**The recommendations outlined reflect what those working to end sexual and domestic violence must do to bring us closer to our goal of ending violence in Wisconsin. To the readers of this report - you have the power to transform your communities by finding opportunities to move these recommendations forward in your personal, professional, and political spheres of influence.**

**Survivors' safety, and lives, are at stake.**

# Acknowledgements

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- [Advocates of Ozaukee](#)
- [American Indians Against Abuse](#)
- [ASTOP](#)
- [Aurora Healing Center](#)
- [Black & Brown Womyn Power Coalition, Inc.](#)
- [Bolton Refuge House, Inc.](#)
- [CAP Services](#)
- [Children's Wisconsin Project Ujima](#)
- [Cia Siab, Inc.](#)
- [DEFY Domestic Abuse Beloit](#)
- [Diverse & Resilient](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Intervention Services](#)
- [DOVE, Inc.](#)
- [Eau Claire Hmong Mutual Assistance Association](#)
- [Family Advocates, Inc.](#)
- [Family Support Center](#)
- [Freedom-Inc](#)
- [Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center](#)
- [Golden House of Green Bay](#)
- [Harbor House Domestic Abuse Program](#)
- [HAVEN Inc.](#)
- [HIR Wellness Institute](#)
- [Hmong American Women's Association](#)
- [Ho-Chunk Nation Domestic Abuse Division](#)
- [Hope House of South Central WI](#)
- [Mahogany Cares](#)
- [Menominee County HSD Family Advocacy Center](#)
- [Milwaukee LGBT Community Center](#)
- [Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition](#)
- [Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention](#)
- [New Beginnings APFV](#)
- [New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers](#)
- [nINA Collective](#)
- [Northstar Counseling Center](#)
- [Passages, Inc.](#)
- [PAVE](#)
- [Personal Development Center](#)
- [RCC Sexual Violence Resource Center](#)
- [Reach Counseling](#)
- [Safe Haven](#)
- [Sexual Assault Center of Family Services](#)
- [Sexual Assault Recovery Program](#)
- [Sojourner Family Peace Center](#)
- [TeamTeal365](#)
- [The Family Center](#)
- [The Women's Center](#)
- [The Women's Community](#)
- [TurningPoint](#)
- [UMOS Latina Resource Center](#)
- [UNIDOS](#)
- [Waking Women Healing Institute](#)
- [We All Rise: African American Resource Center](#)
- [Wise Women Gathering Place](#)
- [Woodland Women](#)
- [YWCA Rock County](#)