



Resource Guide for Addressing the Intersection of Domestic Violence and Firearms

Research has shown that the presence of firearms significantly increases the risk of death or serious injury for victims of domestic or dating violence¹. An abuser's use of a gun to threaten or coerce an intimate partner can leave victims at risk of severe injury and escalating coercive control.² To support communities in the coordination among local, state, Tribal, and federal systems, the Office on Violence Against Women and the Office of Justice Programs have developed this resource list of the Department of Justice's funding, training, and partnership opportunities to enforce firearms laws intended to keep guns out of the hands of adjudicated abusers.

Grant Programs that Can Address the Intersection of Domestic Violence and Firearms

Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Grants

OVW provides grants, through the implementation of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), that support coordinated community responses to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. The following highlights some of the key grant programs that can be used to support initiatives addressing domestic violence and firearms. For a list of all grant programs, please visit the [OVW website](#).

[STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program](#)

The STOP (Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program is awarded to all states and territories. It enhances the capacity of local communities to develop and strengthen effective law enforcement and prosecution strategies to address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking, and to develop and enhance victim services. Each state and territory must allocate 25 percent of the funding for law enforcement, 25 percent for prosecutors, 30 percent for victim services (of which at least 10 percent must be distributed to culturally specific community-based organizations), 5 percent to state and local courts, and 15 percent for discretionary distribution.

[Improving Criminal Justice Response Program](#)

The Grants to Improve the Criminal Justice Response (ICJR Program) is designed to encourage partnerships among state, local, and Tribal governments, courts, victim service providers, state domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions, and rape crisis

¹ Campbell, J. C., et al. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: results from a multisite case control study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(7), 1089-1097.

² Sorenson S. B. & Schut, R. A. (2018) Nonfatal Gun Use in Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp.431-432.



centers to improve the criminal justice response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking as serious violations of criminal law, and to seek safety and autonomy for victims.

[Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program](#)

The Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program (Rural Program) seeks to enhance the safety of rural victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking and support projects uniquely designed to address and prevent these crimes in rural areas. This program encourages collaboration among criminal justice agencies, victim services providers, social services agencies, health professionals, and other community organizations to prevent and address sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking in rural communities.

[Tribal Governments Program](#)

The Tribal Governments Program provides funding to Tribes to develop and enhance effective governmental strategies to curtail violent crimes against and increase the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native women consistent with Tribal law and custom; increase Tribal capacity to respond to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking, and stalking crimes, and strengthen Tribal justice interventions.

The Office of Justice Program (OJP) Grants

OJP provides grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime; advance equity and fairness in the administration of justice; assist victims; and uphold the rule of law. Within OJP, the [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#) and the [Office for Victims of Crime](#) provide grants that address firearms and the needs of survivors. More information can be found at www.ojp.gov.

[Bureau of Justice Assistance \(BJA\) Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program](#)

Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) furthers the Department of Justice's mission by assisting state, local, and Tribal efforts to prevent or reduce crime and violence. Byrne SCIP focuses on gun violence and the programs and initiatives that target the risk factors that are likely to lead to this kind of violence, such as funding for the creation and implementation of Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) programs, state crisis intervention court proceedings, and related gun violence reduction programs/initiatives.

[BJA Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant \(JAG\) Program](#)

The Edward Byrne Memorial JAG program is the leading source of federal justice funding to state and local jurisdictions. The JAG Program provides states, Tribes, and local governments with the critical funding necessary to support a range of program areas including law enforcement, prosecution, courts, prevention and education, crime victim and witness initiatives, and implementation of state crisis intervention court proceedings and related programs or initiatives including, but not limited to mental health courts, drug courts, veterans courts, and extreme risk protection order programs.



[Office for Victims of Crime \(OVC\) Anti-Trafficking Programs](#)

Domestic violence is a crime that can overlap with human trafficking. However, those working with survivors of domestic violence may overlook, mislabel, or fail to identify trafficking situations, and both sex trafficking and labor trafficking can intersect with domestic violence. As the largest U.S. federal funder of services for human trafficking victims, OVC programs support crisis response, case management, housing, physical and behavioral health, education and employment, and legal services for trafficking survivors. Additionally, OVC funds multidisciplinary task forces that require partnerships among victim services providers, law enforcement, and prosecutors to identify human trafficking victims, connect them to services, and bring traffickers to justice. Finally, OVC offers a wide variety of [training and technical assistance](#), including training and tools to assist service providers in identifying human trafficking survivors.

[OVC Discretionary Programs](#)

OVC funds programs covering all types of crime victimization under its Discretionary Programming Division, which supports projects that seek to improve the quality of services, capacity to deliver services, and access to services for victims of crime including demonstration initiatives, national-scope programs, training and technical assistance projects, and responses to terrorism and mass violence. Individual projects or services related to domestic violence and firearms may be implemented under several broad discretionary funding opportunities, such as regularly offered [Field Generated](#), [National Victim Service Hotlines](#), and [Advancing the Use of Technology to Assist Victims of Crime](#) solicitations, as well as the newly offered [Trauma Recovery Center Demonstration Project](#) solicitation. OVC also administers the Advancing Hospital-Based Victim Services initiative, the unique [Emergency and Transitional Pet Shelter and Housing Assistance](#) program, and individual Byrne earmark awards which may offer services at the intersection of domestic violence and firearms.

[OVC Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Funding \(TVSSA\)](#)

OVC administers a percentage of the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) to be spent on TVSSA. Tribal set-aside funding is used to support grants and training and technical assistance designed to improve and expand victim services in American Indian and Alaska Native communities and to build the capacity of Tribes to respond to crime victims' needs. Tribes can use funding from this program to meet the needs of victims and their children who have been affected by the intersection of gun violence and gender-based violence.



Office for Victims of Crime – Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance and Compensation Formula Grant Funding

[Victim Assistance](#)

Each year, states and territories receive VOCA funds to support community-based organizations that serve crime victims. VOCA funds are used to make approximately 5,600 to domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, child abuse programs, and victim service units in law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, hospitals, and social service agencies. Under VOCA, at least 10 percent must go to survivors of domestic violence, though the percentage allocated is often much higher. Services to survivors of domestic violence include but are not limited to crisis intervention, counseling, emergency shelter, criminal justice advocacy, emergency transportation, transitional housing, relocation expenses, educational support (e.g., safety classes, job training, GED classes, life skills) pet care, and emergency need gift cards.

[Crime Victim Compensation](#)

All states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico have established compensation programs for crime victims. Claims related to domestic and family violence accounted for 41 percent of the total number of assault claims that were reimbursed during fiscal years 2021 and 2022, according to the 2023 OVC Report to the Nation. These programs reimburse domestic violence survivors for out-of-pocket expenses that include but are not limited to: medical costs, mental health counseling, funeral and burial costs, lost wages or loss of support, emergency transportation, transitional housing, relocation expenses, crime scene cleanup, pet care, repair or replace property related to personal safety (e.g., doors, locks, windows).

OVW and OJP Training and Technical Assistance Resources

[National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms \(NRCDFV\)](#)

OVW funds the NRCDFV, which is operated by the Battered Women's Justice Project. NRCDFV offers training, technical assistance, and resources, including a model firearms relinquishment protocol, community strategies, and examples of successful approaches. NRCDFV provides a [library of information and tools](#) and promotes a community-based peer mentor system to share implementation and enforcement efforts. NRCDFV partners with the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence to track [state and federal firearm laws on domestic violence](#).

[Firearms Technical Assistance Project \(FTAP\)](#)

OVW's FTAP initiative provides funding and support to a select group of communities nationwide focused on reducing domestic violence homicides and injuries involving firearms. FTAP assists communities in implementing effective policies and practices to prevent firearm access by adjudicated domestic violence offenders. The current FTAP grantee sites are:



Birmingham, Alabama; Muscogee Creek Nation; Columbus, Ohio; Brooklyn, New York; the state of Vermont; Tucson, Arizona; the Georgia Department of Community Supervision; Detroit, Michigan; Knoxville and the Tennessee Valley, Tennessee; Austin, Texas; and Yakima, Washington.

[National Center on Protection Orders and Full Faith & Credit \(NCOPOFFC\)](#)

With OVW support, the Battered Women Justice Project operates the [NCOPOFFC](#), which provides technical assistance and training on protection orders, the full faith and credit provision of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and inter-jurisdictional enforcement of protection orders. NCOPOFFC provides resources on federal and state firearms prohibitions related to protective orders.

[Law Enforcement Training and Technical Assistance Consortium \(LETTAC\)](#)

The OVW-funded LETTAC provides training and technical assistance for law enforcement in responding to, investigating, and prosecuting crimes of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking in a trauma-informed manner, supporting victim healing, safety, and justice. LETTAC provides no-cost comprehensive tailored training and technical assistance on a wide range of topics, including the intersection of domestic violence and firearms.

[Domestic Violence Resource for Increasing Safety and Connection \(DV RISC\)](#)

DV RISC is a national resource center led by the Center for Justice Innovation, Esperanza United, and Ujima Inc., that provides training and technical assistance on intimate partner violence (IPV) risk and lethality assessments for courts and communities to effectively respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence.

[State and Territorial Domestic Violence Coalitions](#)

Additionally, OVW provides VAWA funding for domestic violence coalitions in every state and territory to connect local domestic violence service providers and serve as a resource for training and information about domestic violence programs and relevant state policies. Many coalitions work with local communities to support coordinated community responses or collaborate on the development of firearms legislation and policies to support and protect survivors of domestic violence.

[National ERPO Resource Center \(ERC\)](#)

[The Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions](#), in partnership with BJA, established the ERC in 2023. The ERC is a training and technical assistance hub designed to support states and localities with the implementation of their ERPO programs to reduce gun violence and save lives.



Publications and Resources

[Misdemeanor Crimes Domestic Violence Reference Card](#)

The Department of Justice issued a new Reference Card explaining the tools available under the Gun Control Act to prosecute domestic violence offenders who illegally obtain firearms – including the new Bipartisan Safer Communities Act dating-relationship provisions.

[A Brief History and Framework of Federal Firearms Laws Addressing Intimate Partner Violence](#)

This resource, published in May 2024, provides an explanation of the current federal firearms laws that address intimate partner violence, how those laws are implemented, and how they interact. In particular, it focuses on the federal firearms prohibitions for domestic violence orders of protection, as well as misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence (MCDV). It also provides important information regarding the addition of dating relationships to the MCDV firearms prohibitions, which were included in the recent passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

[Strategic Assessment of Firearm Enforcement \(S.A.F.E.\) Tool](#)

The S.A.F.E. Tool is an inventory of questions designed to facilitate a discussion with a survivor on safety strategies around firearms. When a survivor is concerned about threats of or actual firearms violence from an abusive partner, survivors and advocates can use this tool to evaluate if, when, how, and for what period they want the abusive partner to be prohibited from access to firearms. The information obtained from this tool can assist survivors when creating a comprehensive personalized plan to improve their safety and the safety of their child(ren) by allowing them to incorporate their strategies around firearms.

[Implementing an Effective Firearm Relinquishment Protocol](#)

This resource is designed to assist communities in developing a firearms relinquishment protocol for domestic violence offenders. It contemplates a firearm relinquishment process that emphasizes public safety through the separation of adjudicated domestic abusers from their firearms.

[Matrix of State and Territory Laws on Firearms and Domestic Violence](#)

The matrix contains state and territorial firearm statutes as they relate to civil protection orders; criminal offenses, procedures, prohibited transferees; licenses/permits, and background checks.

[The New Misdemeanor Dating Violence Federal Firearms Prohibition: An FAQ for Victim Advocates](#)

In 2022, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act partially closed what has sometimes been referred to as the “boyfriend loophole,” by expanding the federal firearm prohibition for people convicted of certain misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence to also include dating violence. This resource explains what changes the law made, how “dating relationships” are defined by



this law, and how victim advocates can support survivors whose current or former dating partners may have access to, or be prohibited from accessing, firearms.

[Extreme Risk Protection Order \(ERPO\) Toolkit](#)

An ERPO allows family members, law enforcement officers, or other concerned individuals to petition a court to temporarily remove firearms from individuals who are deemed to pose a risk to themselves or others. The order prohibits the individual from purchasing, possessing, or receiving firearms for the duration of the order. These orders are also known by various other names, including Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVRs), Risk-Warrants, and Lethal Violence Protection Orders (LVPOs). The toolkit includes the following resources:

[Extreme Risk Protection Orders vs Domestic Violence Protection Orders](#)

[Extreme Risk Protection Orders – At a glance](#)

[Extreme Risk Protection Orders – Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Extreme Risk Protection Order Statutes](#)

[Law Enforcement Pocket Guide](#)

A brief checklist for law enforcement on full faith and credit enforcement of protection orders.

[Official Use Exemption](#)

The Gun Control Act (GCA) prohibits persons subject to certain qualifying protection orders from possessing or receiving firearms and/or ammunition. 18 U.S.C. § 922(g) (8). However, 18 U.S.C. § 925(a)(1) exempts the United States, states, and political subdivisions of states from most provisions of the GCA, including the firearm prohibitions contained in §§ 922(g), (d) and (n), **except** the prohibitions imposed for persons convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence (18 U.S.C. § 922(d)(9) and (g) (9)). As a result, employees of a federal, state, or local department or agency, such as law enforcement officers and members of the military, are prohibited from receiving and possessing firearms and ammunition, even on behalf of the government entity, if the employee has been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.

[Firearms Checklist for Judges](#)

This checklist for judges provides key information on the federal Gun Control Act provisions prohibiting the purchase, transport, or possession of firearms by those subject to a protection order (18 USC 922 (g)(8)), detailed information on who is prohibited, as well as surrender, transfer and return of firearms.

[Misdemeanor Crime of Domestic Violence FAQ – Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives](#)

Answers to some common questions on the use or purchase of a firearm(s) by a person convicted of a domestic violence crime.



Implementation Partnerships with U.S. Attorneys' Offices

U.S. Attorneys can prosecute prohibited individuals under federal firearms laws. Local law enforcement and prosecutors are encouraged to reach out to their [local U.S. Attorney's Office](#). Below are examples of U.S. Attorney offices that have developed specific programs to collaborate with law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers. Some of these initiatives are supported by [Project Safe Neighborhoods \(PSN\)](#), a nationwide project coordinated by U.S. Attorneys' Offices across the 94 federal judicial districts, which span the 50 states, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. BJA awards PSN funding to certified fiscal agents, who collaborate with PSN teams in their respective districts to implement and support their PSN strategies that unite federal, state, local, and Tribal law enforcement officials, prosecutors, community leaders, and other stakeholders to identify and address the most pressing violent crime issues in their communities.

PSN: [Operation Safe Families: Protecting Families From Gun Violence](#) – U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Alabama

Operation Safe Families is an initiative to address domestic violence in the Northern District of Alabama. Through Operation Safe Families, the U.S. Attorney's Office works with federal, state, and local law enforcement to prosecute domestic violence offenders who violate federal firearms laws, while also partnering with victim services providers to provide comprehensive support for survivors and their children. Operation Safe Families is a partnership between the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); Birmingham Police Department; Jefferson County Sheriff's Office; Jefferson County District Attorney's Office; One Place Family Justice Center; YWCA; and Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama.

PSN: [Operation 922](#) – U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Oklahoma

Operation 922 brings law enforcement and prosecutors together to hold domestic abusers accountable by prioritizing prosecutions of federal firearms offenses, using a survivor-centered approach that connects domestic violence survivors with comprehensive victim assistance services and support. Operation 922 is a collaboration of law enforcement and prosecutor partners that include the U.S. Attorney's Office, Oklahoma County District Attorney's Office, ATF, U.S. Marshals Service, FBI, and state, local, and Tribal law enforcement agencies in the Western District of Oklahoma, in collaboration with the Palomar Family Justice Center.

[Operation Take Aim](#) – U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Texas

The U.S. Attorney's Office – in partnership with ATF Dallas and the Dallas Police Department – launched Operation Take Aim, a collaborative initiative designed to curb violent crime by federally prosecuting individuals most likely to harm the community. Of particular interest to Take Aim officers, agents, and prosecutors are gun crimes, including prohibited individuals in possession of a firearm, unlicensed dealing, straw purchasing, and brandishing a firearm during a crime of violence.