

May 21, 2019

BUDGET BITE: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

MICHAEL SHIELDS AND WENDY PATTON

Every Ohioan should live in a safe, healthy home, free from abuse. Domestic violence robs thousands of this most basic of needs. Nationally, there are [insufficient resources](#) to provide haven for victims of domestic violence. Resources are particularly strained in Ohio; [43 other states](#) (including the District of Columbia) provide more funding per person for domestic violence prevention and shelters. The state budget bill as passed by the House includes \$2.95 million more over the two-year budget period for 2020-21 than in the current budget for 2018-19, an increase of 123%. It is critically important that this new funding make it through the Senate and be included in the budget bill Governor DeWine will sign.

[Domestic violence](#) is intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault, or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control by an intimate partner, a parent, or another person against someone in the same home. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, threats, and emotional abuse.

More than 76,000 domestic disputes were [reported](#) to Ohio police in 2017. In the year ending July 1, 2018, Ohio suffered 91 domestic violence [fatalities](#). The National Network to End Domestic Violence found that 270 Ohioans were [turned away](#) for domestic violence prevention or recovery services in a single day in 2017.

STATE FUNDING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

The federal government provides funding for domestic violence services. Ohio administers those funds through the Department of Public Safety. Federal funds are matched with state funds from fees on birth and death certificates and divorce filings. Ohio [ranks](#) near the bottom in state and local revenues to domestic violence programs adjusted for population, spending just \$2.04 per person. The national average is \$5.82.

State funding for domestic violence programs is particularly weak in Ohio. In the current two-year budget period for 2018-19, Ohio spent about \$1.5 million from fees on birth and death certificates and divorce and dissolution filings to match federal funds. Among the 32 states that dedicate general revenue (taxpayer) funds for domestic violence services, the average spends \$1.91 per person from this state revenue source alone: nearly as much as Ohio spends from state and local sources combined. Accounting for population, Ohio would need to spend \$22.3 million to match per capita average GRF spending among states. Up to now, Ohio has provided a minuscule amount of GRF for this purpose: just under \$29,000 in GRF during the two-year budget for 2018-19, all of which went to the Attorney General's office.

Ohio's counties pay an unusual share of the cost of many health and human services through property tax levies and fees. They [bolster](#) the federal domestic violence grant dollars allotted

by the state with additional fees on marriage and divorce filings and in some cases, with local human service levy dollars. Deep [cuts](#) in state funding to local governments and human service levies have made it harder for local governments to support human services in many critical areas, including domestic violence.

Domestic violence programs in Ohio need a dedicated line item from stable state sources. The budget bill as passed by the House of Representatives for 2020-21 adds \$1 million a year in General Revenue Fund (GRF dollars) to domestic violence programming in line item 055504 of the Attorney General’s Office. An earmark against another line item (055321) allows expenditure of an additional \$100,000 for domestic violence services. In addition, state funding through the Department of Public Safety, the “Family Violence Shelter Program,” is maintained at the heightened 2019 level in both 2020 and 2021. Overall funding for domestic violence services is increased by almost \$3 million in the coming, two-year budget period in the House-passed version of the budget bill, compared to the budget for 2018-19.

Domestic violence funds more than double in HB 166									
State resources for services, 2018-2021									
Agency	Line item	Program name	Fund	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	Increase in FY 2020-21 over FY 2018-19	% change
DPS	768689	Family Violence Shelter Programs	Dedicated purpose	\$820,764	\$1,550,000	\$1,550,000	\$1,550,000	\$729,236	31%
AGO	055504	Domestic Violence Programs	General Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	100%
AGO	055321	Earmark for domestic violence	General Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$200,000	100%
AGO	055621	Domestic Violence Shelters	Dedicated Purpose	\$3,873	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$21,127	73%

Source: Policy Matters Ohio based on Ohio Legislative Service Commission appropriation spreadsheet for HB 166 as passed by the house. Note: AGO stands for “Attorney General’s Office,” DPS for “Department of Public Safety.” DPF stands for Dedicated Purpose Fund, which is a fee or a charge, and GRF for General Revenue Fund, which is made up of taxpayer general revenues.

The new line item “Domestic Violence Programs” (055504) will support shelters, hotlines, victim advocacy, and prevention education. According to the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, this is the first time the state will support prevention, which has until now relied on a competitive federal grant.

The two-year budget approved by the House adds \$1 million annually to the \$1.5 million Ohio now funds through Dedicated Purpose dollars. HB 166 as passed by the House is a start to building up the kind of support needed to address the needs of people who suffer from domestic violence, but much more is needed. The legislature should take steps to gradually bring Ohio in line with other states.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ohio should join a majority of states that provide dedicated general revenue funding for domestic violence prevention and shelters that help victims of abuse leave unsafe homes.

- Pass the budget with the \$1 million annual General Revenue Fund allocation added by the House this budget cycle.
- Lawmakers need to increase funding by the next budget cycle to rebalance the funding of domestic violence shelters and services between state and local sources.