



OVERVIEW OF THE BUDGET PROCESS: STATE (PENNSYLVANIA)

At the state level, the budget process appropriates money from various state funding streams, primarily the General Fund, to various state agencies and programs. The state budget includes a line item for funding for domestic violence services. This line item is part of the Department of Public Welfare budget, in the Human Services Program.

Timeline for State Budget Process

First Tuesday in February	The Governor’s Budget is released, outlining the levels of funding the administration would like to see for all state funding.
Late February/ Early March	The House and Senate Appropriations Committees hold hearings on each state department’s budget, at which each department head defends the Governor’s budget.
Late February/ Early Spring	The House (and sometimes Senate) Appropriations Committee drafts a budget bill, with consideration given to the Governor’s Budget, what was spent last year, the funding priorities of each caucus, and public input. This is an important time period in which to contact legislators and ask that they make domestic violence funding a priority within their caucuses, and include an increase in the budget bill.
Spring (approx. early May)	The budget bill is first introduced in the House, then sent to the Senate where usually it is amended and sent back to the House. (Sometimes the Senate introduces its own budget bill, as well.) The two chambers continue to exchange the budget bill(s) between them several times, negotiating amendments with each draft. The Governor’s office is also involved in this process, trying to achieve a budget bill as close to the Governor’s Budget as possible. This is another critical time to lobby the legislature – to keep or raise any proposed funding increase in the budget bill, or to include an amendment to add an increase if none is included in the bill as introduced.
June 30	The final budget must be reached by this date, the end of the PA fiscal year. Sometimes a stalemate is reached, such as in 2009 when the state budget was not passed for more than 100 days past the June 30 deadline.

OVERVIEW OF THE BUDGET PROCESS: FEDERAL

At the federal level, the budget process and the appropriations process are different yet very connected. In general, the federal *budget* process creates a non-binding Budget Resolution, which sets the size of the pie (the total money available). The federal *appropriations* process creates the final, binding Congressional Budget, which divvies up the actual money for that fiscal year. It is the final Congressional Budget that dictates how much money federal agencies and programs will receive.

Think of pie: the budget process determines how big the pie is; the appropriations process divides that pie into slices for various programs – like VAWA, FVPSA, and VOCA, the three primary federal funding vehicles for domestic violence services.

- Note: When a bill is passed, it authorizes the Appropriations Committee to spend a certain amount of money on a given program. That authorization is more of a guideline, and Congress can appropriate less, more, or refuse to fund it altogether.

Both the House and Senate create their own Budget Resolutions, which usually look very different from each other and need to be resolved (or not!) in Conference Committee.

Within the House Appropriations Committee [link to <http://appropriations.house.gov/>] and the Senate Appropriations Committee [link to <http://appropriations.senate.gov/>] there are a dozen subcommittees that each writes a bill to fund different federal agencies within the subject matter of that subcommittee. In particular,

- The various programs within VAWA are appropriated through two subcommittees – the Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Subcommittee and the Labor, Health, and Human Services (LHHS) Subcommittee.
- FVPSA is appropriated by the Labor, Health, and Human Services (LHHS) Subcommittee
- VOCA is appropriated by the Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Subcommittee

Timeline of the Federal Budget and Appropriations Process

First Monday in February	Release of the President’s Budget Request outlining what the administration would like to see for all federal spending. The Budget committee considers these requests along with their own priorities and proposes a Budget Resolution.
February & March	Members of Congress write letters to the Appropriations Committees noting their priorities for funding. This is a critical time period to lobby Congress, both to have Members sign on to letters and to have them prioritize funding for domestic violence programs.
Early Spring	If there is a Budget Resolution passed, it usually occurs in the Spring. Programs must contact Congress to urge support for amendments to increase the budget for VAWA programs.
Spring	The 13 Appropriations subcommittees start writing their bills, usually before the Budget Resolution passes.

Late Spring/ Early Summer	Subcommittee bills are finished, voted on, then considered by the full Appropriations Committee. The bills that fund VAWA are usually voted on in July. This is a critical period to contact Congress to support amendments to increase VAWA funding.
August	Members of Congress are home for “recess” and traveling through their districts listening to the concerns of their constituents. Take advantage of recess to meet with them in person by arranging a visit to your program, hosting a legislative event, or going to their district office.
September 30	Congress tries to bring Appropriations bills to the floor by this time because it is the end of the federal fiscal year. They almost always fail, and Continuing Resolutions are passed to extend existing funding into the fall.
October/ November	The Appropriations bills are voted on and go to conference committee. The final Congressional Budget is usually approved shortly before Congress recesses for the year. This is the final opportunity to lobby Congress to increase VAWA funding in the final Congressional Budget.