

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Women's Coalition Helped 243 Rape Victims In 2014, But Services Are Being Cut Because Funding Has Stalled

VIC News / **Published On June 30, 2015 10:48 AM /**

Staff **June 30, 2015**



In a press release issued on Monday, the Women's Coalition of St. Croix (WCSC), which aids victims of domestic violence, rape, physical and sexual assault and other crimes of violence, revealed that it's current financial condition is forcing it to cut back on much-needed services.

In its release, WCSC says it's aware that the fiscal situation in the territory is impacting businesses as well as individuals. The organization also noted that nonprofits -- including itself -- have been crippled by the lack of funding usually disbursed through local

government agencies.

The organization wanted to give the public a clear understanding of the services it provides, and has made available statistics of clients it helped in 2014, as well as giving a brief background of its history.

WCSC has served the community since its inception in 1981. The agency has been able to assist hundreds of thousands of clients through financial support, grants, and fundraising efforts.

In 2014, the WCSC assisted:

- 1,184 survivors of domestic violence
- 243 survivors of rape
- 82 child survivors of physical and sexual assault
- 25 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking and their children were housed in Sojourner House and other emergency shelters.

But recent cutbacks, coupled with [forestalled government funding](#), has drastically changed the availability of services offered to victims. To illustrate, the agency described its typical victim: A woman is in an abusive relationship (physically, emotionally, financially, and sexually). She has two children and lives with the abuser. She realizes she must leave the situation for the sake of her and her children's safety, and turns to the WCSC for help.

Prior to 2012, a woman, endangered by an abuser, could file for a restraining order and leave the house (if owned by the husband). She would receive financial assistance from the WCSC for rent, WAPA, food (vouchers), pampers, and a security deposit. However, today, that money no longer exists; therefore, the woman must find start-up money which would total approximately \$1,753, including the following expenses:

- Emergency housing \$ 150
- 1st Month Rent \$ 150
- Security Deposit \$ 150
- WAPA (\$141 light and \$162 water) \$ 303
- Food (\$250/person x 4/month) \$1,000

In the absence of financial resources necessary to begin a life without the abuser, the woman has no choice but to return to the home and place herself and her children in danger. The woman is trapped. She has no choice. The emotional and physical trauma continues and most often escalates. The children are endangered and exposed to violence resulting in lifelong effects.

While the concept of funding needed to run nonprofit agencies could appear abstract, WCSC says in reality, it impacts every individual involved. Programs are cut, staff is laid off and essential services are eliminated. To date, the WCSC is owed \$691,651.90: \$121,515 from Violence Against Women (VAWO); \$375,305 from Victims of Crime Act (VOCA); and \$194,831.90 from the Department of Education for an adult education program, according to WCSC officials.

"In the absence of funding, those most in need are denied services," WCSC said. "Our community can and must do better for its people."

