



Supporting Survivor Health with American Rescue Plan Funds: Making the most of this opportunity

June 2024

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) is a comprehensive economic relief package passed by the United States Congress and signed into law in March 2021. This fund allocated significant resources, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to address inequities and the growing health needs of communities. Organizations and localities can draw down these funds until September 2025.

One of these allocations, administered by the Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services (OFVPS), is the [ARP COVID-19 Testing, Vaccines, and Mobile Health Units Access](#) (ARP Health) funds. ARP Health is supporting a multitude of efforts—with unmatched flexibility—for states, territories, tribes, DV and sexual assault programs, and culturally specific organizations to maintain operations during the public health emergency and address survivor health.

These funds can be used to support **health advocacy**—addressing and responding to survivor health needs in advocacy settings. Health advocacy significantly improves survivor health access and outcomes. It can range across a robust spectrum of services and supports that can be implemented in phases. Most importantly, survivors *want* and appreciate health advocacy services to support their own health, as well as their children’s.

“I wish the DV program I was with at the time of my abuse had a relationship with health care providers because I fell through the cracks of the system. It could have assisted me to get the medical care I needed in a timely manner.”
~Hilde, domestic violence survivor

Partnerships with health care organizations are essential to health advocacy. DV service providers are champions for initiating and strengthening relationships with health partners that foster improved access to the services, supplies and supports survivors need for health and wellbeing. Successful strategies for how ARP Health funds are supporting survivor health include:

- Centering lived experience of survivors to inform services and program development;
- Integrating health advocacy efforts such as:
 - Training for advocates on trauma-informed health advocacy techniques;
 - Routine health assessments within the intake process;
 - Supporting staff wellness and resilience;
 - Quality assurance and improvement work to measure success and strengthen efforts over time.
- Developing health care partnerships that foster collaborative, coordinated care including:
 - Bi-directional referral systems to make warm handoffs for medical and mental health services;
 - Co-location of advocates in health care settings;
 - Provision of mobile health services (health vans, telehealth, and onsite services), including COVID testing and vaccine access.

Fostering Sustainability

Although ARP Health funding is short term, many programs are finding creative ways to maximize grant monies to support sustainability of health advocacy services and programs beyond the funding cycle. For example:

- Optimizing strategies within health care partnerships that are not expensive to sustain but yield high impact on survivor health;
- Investing in a large stock of supplies for use after funding ends;
- Leveraging funds to identify opportunities for new or braided funding;
- Prioritizing data collection to demonstrate needs and impact to help acquire new funding.

There is still time before the end of September 2025 for programs to draw down these funds! Want to learn more? Check out these resources!

- [Tools for advocates for supporting survivor health](#)
- [How to start and grow a DV and health care partnership](#)
- [ARP COVID-19 Testing, Vaccines, and Mobile Health Units Access Program Instruction Memo](#)

State Coalitions in [Washington](#) and [Texas](#) have created innovative ways to center survivors and lift up advocate wellness using ARP Health funds.

The [National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence](#) offers technical assistance and training on partnership building, program planning and health advocacy. For support, contact skukke@futureswithoutviolence.org or jhaddad@futureswithoutviolence.org.