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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Senator Steven Bradford, Chair

2021 - 2022 Regular

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**Bill No:** SB 720                      **Hearing Date:** April 13, 2021  
**Author:** Ochoa Bogh  
**Version:** February 19, 2021  
**Urgency:** No                                      **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** KW

**Subject:** *Statewide Domestic Violence Program*

## HISTORY

**Source:** Author

**Prior Legislation:** SB 1276 (Rubio), Ch. 249, Stats. 2020  
SB 1062 (Bowen), Ch. 639, Stats. 2006  
AB 225 (La Follette), Ch.705, Stats. 1985  
SB 91 (Presley), Ch.892, Stats. 1977

**Support:** California Partnership to End Domestic Violence; Little Hoover Commission

**Opposition:** None known

## PURPOSE

***The purpose of this bill is to require the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to provide the full amount of a grant award to a domestic violence shelter service provider (DVSSP) at the beginning of a grant period.***

*Existing law* establishes the Comprehensive Statewide Domestic Violence Program (CSDVP) within Cal OES. (Pen. Code, § 13823.15, subd. (a).)

*Existing law* states that the goals of the CSDVP are to provide local assistance to existing providers, to maintain and expand services based on the needs of the population, and to establish a directed program for the development of domestic violence services in underserved areas. Requires Cal OES to provide financial and technical assistance to local domestic violence centers implementing all of the following services: 24 hour crisis hotlines, counseling, business centers, emergency safe homes/shelters for victims and families, emergency food and clothing, emergency response to calls from law enforcement, hospital emergency room protocol, emergency transportation, supportive peer counseling, counseling for children, court and social service advocacy, legal assistance with restraining orders, devices, and custody disputes, community resource and referral, and household establishment assistance. Requires that priority for financial and technical assistance be given to emergency shelter programs and safe homes for victims of domestic violence and their children. (Pen. Code § 13823.15, subd. (b).)

*Existing law* requires Cal OES and the advisory committee collaboratively administer the CSDVP and allocate funds to local centers who meet the funding criteria. Provides that the

centers may seek, receive, and make use of any funds which may be available from all public and private sources to augment state funds received. (Pen. Code § 13823.15, subds. (c)(1) & (c)(2).)

*Existing law* requires the funding process for distributing grant awards to DVSSPs to be administered by Cal OES as follows:

- Requires Cal OES establish each of the following:
  - The process and standards for determining whether to grant, renew, or deny funding to any DVSSP applying or reapplying for funding under the terms of the program.
  - For DVSSPs applying for grants under the request for proposal process, a system for grading grant applications in relation to the standards established, and an appeal process for applications that are denied.
  - For DVSSPs reapplying for funding under the request for application process, a system for grading the performance of DVSSPs in relation to the standards established and an appeal process for decisions to deny or reduce funding.
- Requires grants for shelters that were not funded in the previous cycle be awarded as a result of a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process.
- Requires that grants be awarded to DVSSPs that propose to maintain shelters or services previously granted funding pursuant to this section, to expand existing services or create new services, or to establish new domestic violence shelters in underserved or unserved areas. Provides that each grant be awarded for a three-year term.
- Provides that DVSSPs reapplying for grants are not be subject to a competitive grant process, but are subject to a request for application (RFA) process.
- Requires that a DVSSP funded through this program in the previous grant cycle be funded upon reapplication, unless, pursuant to the assessment required under the RFA process, its past performance history fails to meet the standards established by CAL OES
- Requires CAL OES to conduct a minimum of one site visit every three years for each DVSSP funded for the purpose of conducting a performance assessment of, and to provide subsequent technical assistance for, each shelter visited. Outlines what must be included in the performance assessment. (Pen. Code, § 13823.15, subd. (f).)

*This bill* requires Cal OES to award any state funds appropriated for the purpose of the CSDVP and awarded to a DVSSP to be awarded in their entirety at the beginning of the grant period.

## COMMENTS

### 1. Need for This Bill

According to the author:

The Hoover Commission initiated a study to understand if state government is organized in a way that most effectively serves Californians affected by Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), and if the state has chosen the best way to fund IPV services. This initial report addresses a problem that has a fairly straightforward fix: the efficient and proper distribution of Domestic Violence Assistance Program grant funding.

It is unconscionable that organizations serving some of the most vulnerable people in California must incur borrowing costs because the state takes so long to reimburse them. These often are small organizations running on small budgets, and the state should ensure that their resources go toward providing services.

This problem becomes yet more urgent in light of shelter-in-place orders in response to the COVID-19 virus. Rates of IPV increase during times of stress, particularly economic stress, and when families gather together, such as during Thanksgiving.

SB 720 would implement a recommendation made by The Hoover Institute to simply authorize DVAP recipients to receive the full amount of their grant funding upfront instead of using a reimbursement model. SB 720 is an immediate and simple step to supporting DVAP recipients. Currently DVAP recipients receive about half a million dollars a year, with roughly 60 percent of that coming from federal funds and the remaining 40 percent, or \$200,000 per organization, from state coffers.

California already allows for advance payments of grants for some programs. For example, the 2019-20 Budget Act, which includes language limiting the advance of DVAP funds to 25 percent, provides for partial or full advance payment of grants for a variety of programs related to community corrections, emergency food delivery, and other topics.

Even with an advance payment of the state portion of the DVAP grant, recipients would still face extensive, existing auditing and reporting requirements, which the Commission believes will suffice to guard against the rare cases of fraud in this area.

## **2. Domestic Violence Funding**

With respect to state and federal funding for domestic violence services, the federal government provides most of the funding awarded to domestic violence providers and creates rules regarding how the state may allocate those funds. The state then decides which programs and services will receive federal funding. Cal OES administers federal funding for victim services in consultation with three advisory committees. Cal OES currently administers about \$84 million in federal funds for programs focused on domestic violence, and another \$5 million in federal funds for programs focused on domestic and sexual violence.

Penal Code section 13823.15 establishes the Comprehensive Statewide Domestic Violence Program within Cal OES. In creating this program, the Legislature delineated three goals: (1) to provide local assistance to existing service providers; (2) to maintain and expand services based on a demonstrated need; and (3) to establish a targeted or directed program for the development and establishment of domestic violence services in currently unserved and underserved areas. The statute outlines 14 services deemed necessary to accomplish those goals and directs Cal OES to provide financial and technical assistance to domestic violence centers providing those services. Cal OES fulfills its obligations through the Domestic Violence Assistance Program (DVAP) which is the state's primary domestic violence program. State domestic violence-related general funds only go to DVAP, and DVAP grants are noncompetitive for DVSSPs that are reapplying for grants (i.e, a DVAP recipient's reapplication for grant funding must be accepted

by the state barring severe performance failures). Approximately \$53 million is distributed to 102 shelter-based providers through this program, with about 60 percent of the funding coming from the federal government and the remaining funding coming from the state.

### 3. Little Hoover Commission Report

In the fall of 2019, the Little Hoover Commission began an assessment of the state's response to domestic violence. In its report published in April 2020, the Commission found that organizations funded through DVAP face severe financial challenges as they wait to be reimbursed for services provided. (Little Hoover Commission, *Intimate Partner Violence: Getting the Money to Those on the Front Line*, Report 249 <[https://lhc.ca.gov/sites/lhc.ca.gov/files/Report%20249\\_1.pdf](https://lhc.ca.gov/sites/lhc.ca.gov/files/Report%20249_1.pdf)>.) The Commission laid out the problem as follows:

If service providers immediately and accurately complete their reimbursement request, and the state meets all of its statutory timelines in processing reimbursements, then service providers wait about 79 days from Day 1 of providing the service until receiving reimbursement. This assumes service providers complete their paperwork immediately after the 30-day reporting period ends and pay for overnight delivery to Cal OES. If service providers need more than a day to complete their request, the wait can be up to around 109 days between Day 1 of providing services and reimbursement – providing everything runs smoothly.

Not everything runs smoothly, of course. For instance, sometimes recipients fill out forms incorrectly, emergencies pull Cal OES staff away from grants management and recipients sometimes receive conflicting instructions, to their detriment. One member of the Commission's advisory committee recounted that Cal OES instructed her to submit invoices one way, which she did, only to have them bounced back to her with instructions to submit them completely differently. New state IT ventures, such as Fi\$Cal, outside of Cal OES' control can interrupt prompt processing of payments. As a result, service providers wait even longer for payment. At the Commission's October 2019 hearing, Beth Hassett, Executive Director for WEAVE, reported her organization was waiting on a million dollars in reimbursements from Cal OES. Some invoices had been submitted roughly four months earlier. For small organizations, long delays for such large amounts are a grave burden. (*Id.* at pp. 7-8.)

Because most domestic violence service providers are small organizations that lack reserves to cover expenses until reimbursement checks arrive, these organizations are forced to make difficult decisions including taking out lines of credit, leaving grant money unspent, or not applying for grants in the first place. (*Id.* at p. 8.) Although organizations may request up to a 25 percent advance of state grant funding, the Commission did not find that this adequately addresses the challenges and needs of domestic violence service providers. Instead, the Commission recommended that the Legislature enact, and the Governor sign into law, a mechanism through which recipients of DVAP funding, or any future program implementing California Penal Code section 13823.15, receive the entirety of the state's portion of the grant funding at the beginning of the grant period. (*Id.* at p. 10.)

This bill adopts the Commission's recommendation and requires CAL OES to provide the full amount of a grant award to a DVSSP at the beginning of a grant period.

**-- END --**