

ANDVSA Survey

Name: Ashley Carrick

Office Sought: House District 35 Representative – re-election

Please indicate whether you view domestic violence and sexual assault as an area of primary concern for you.

- Primary concern
- Secondary concern
- No on my radar

Are you familiar with local programs that provide domestic violence and sexual assault services to victims across Alaska?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

If yes, how often do you interact with the domestic violence/sexual assault shelter or victim services program in your area?

- Quarterly
- Annually
- Other

1. The Alaska Victimization Survey (AVS) found 57.7% of Alaskan women have experienced intimate partner violence (domestic violence), sexual violence, or both. What is your vision for Alaska when it comes to reducing sexual assault and domestic violence? What steps are you prepared to take to get there?

Alaska's domestic violence and sexual assault rates are disproportionately high and require a multi-faceted approach. First and foremost, our domestic violence and sexual assault survivor services that require State support need to be predictably and adequately funded. Further, it is critical to invest in addiction and treatment services, mental health treatment programs, and crisis intervention services that can put downward pressure on some of the root correlates with this type of violence. Additionally, Alaska can do a better job of providing workforce development opportunities that create a pathway for professionals to enter this critical field.

2. What responsibilities do you believe the Legislature and other elected officials hold in advancing efforts to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault?

Through the Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, the Alaska Legislature funds grants for domestic violence shelters and services. Since 2024, the Alaska Legislature has increased funding for these services, but much more investment is necessary, and I will continue to be a champion for these services. Further, it is our responsibility to listen to the voices of survivors, service providers, and advocates, and to elevate and take action regarding these experiences and perspectives.

- What efforts have you made at the local, state, and federal level to address domestic violence and sexual assault?

I have supported additional investments in domestic violence shelters and prevention programs. I have also taken action to reduce contraceptive coercion, which is a known type of intimate partner violence- I sponsored legislation in the 33rd Alaska State Legislature to guarantee insurance coverage for a 12-month supply of contraceptives, thus helping women across our state better manage their own contraceptive care. This bill passed on a wide bipartisan margin and I intend to bring it forward again under a new Governor's administration.

3. Would you be willing to increase the current level of funding for victims' services?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

4. Would you be willing to increase the current level of funding for domestic violence/sexual assault prevention work?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

5. Would you be willing to increase the current level of funding for legal services for victims?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

6. Currently, the domestic violence response is largely a criminal justice response. Do you have ideas for other types of responses? What are they?

There are instances when a criminal justice response is necessary to address a domestic violence situation when someone is actively being harmed. However, for the most part, I believe mental health interventions would be more effective, including counseling, cognitive behavioral therapy, and potentially tribal court intervention, when appropriate. Getting both victims and perpetrators access to the resources that can change the trajectory of many of these crimes in ways that criminal intervention alone cannot. They also act as proactive steps to address problematic behavior and perceptions before they become more serious actions that require public safety intervention.

7. Do you think the penalties for sexual violence crimes in Alaska are:

- a. Too harsh
- b. Too soft

c. Just right

d. What are your reasons?

- i. There are instances when they are too harsh, and instances when they are too soft. I think we should focus more on wrap-around mental health services to address domestic violence issues when possible. I also support the work of tribal courts and alternative means of behavior correction that focus on restoration and behavior change rather than always resorting to punitive action.

8. Do you think the penalties for domestic violence crimes in Alaska are:

a. Too harsh

b. Too soft

c. Just right

d. What are your reasons?

- i. There are instances when they are too harsh, and instances when they are too soft. I think we should focus more on wrap-around mental health services to address domestic violence issues when possible. Still, I am open to suggestions related to specific laws that may require updates/ changes to better support healing and community restoration.

9. Would you support funding through the Department of Corrections to engage individuals who choose to harm their partners/families through batterers intervention programming (BIPs)? Do you think this is the responsibility of the government? Why or why not?

Yes. I believe these programs can help address root causes of domestic violence. I believe this is the State's responsibility through DOC as well as in partnership with external organizations. It is the State's job to care for those in our custody and to try to achieve lasting change for the individuals in our custody as well as for the communities that those incarcerated will eventually return to.

What would be your ideas for providing services to people who choose to cause harm to their partners?

Alaska needs more and better funded mental and behavioral health services and prevention programs to address these issues. While services do need to be provided at the DOC level and throughout the criminal justice process, there is so much more that our State can do to intervene early within communities. We can start by better supporting the prevention work of our local domestic violence advocacy organizations, as well as other social services providers across our state.

10. Do you believe abortion access should be legally protected for survivors of rape or incest?

a. Yes

b. No

11. The state of Alaska is experiencing a housing shortage statewide. This is impacting domestic and sexual violence survivors' ability to move forward with their lives. What would be your ideas to address this?

In the short term, we need to invest more heavily in domestic violence shelters and low-income housing that can support domestic violence survivors. Longer-term investments in housing construction, workforce development, and community services in the state will help make more housing available and desirable, and can put downward pressure on the high-cost, low availability, and low quality challenges that continue to plague our State.

12. Children are a particularly vulnerable population and may be traumatized by living with an abusive person and witnessing violence perpetrated against a parent or caretaker. What remedies might you suggest to provide protection for these children?

I was proud to support SB 41 to provide additional mental health education in schools. We need to invest in school mental health services and counseling to get students the help they need. Further, we absolutely must do a better job of recruiting and retaining caseworkers in the Office of Children's Services, so that each child can receive greater contact and support throughout such incredibly high-stress situations. Additionally, we need to be extremely careful while considering bills that would mandate overly specific parental communication and reunification goals above all other priorities. While this is an admirable goal, it does not make sense for every child in every circumstance. The physical, mental, and emotional needs of the child must come first.

13. A sunset review is a mandatory, periodic evaluation of an executive board or commission to determine if its public benefit justifies its continued existence, funding, and legal authority. The Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) in the Department of Public Safety is scheduled to sunset June 30, 2028, and will be reviewed during the next Legislature. Would you support a bill to extend the Council?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Maybe

d. What are your reasons?

14. Please explain any solutions you would propose to support victims and hold offenders accountable for their actions.

In 2020, I received my Master's Degree in Public Health from UAA, and through my program was able to gain a deeper understanding of the disproportionate problem that Alaska faces regarding domestic violence and sexual assault. I believe we need to invest in robust public safety and crisis intervention services. We also need to better provide wrap-around services, including mental health and counseling services, to help address our staggering rates of domestic violence. It's been an honor to work with ANDVSA in Juneau, and I look forward to continuing that productive relationship. Thank you for all the work that you do!