

Candidate Survey

Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA)

Return survey by **October 9, 2026** to: andvsa@andvsa.org

Complete each answer box and check one response where choices are provided.

Name

Cliff Groh

Office/District Representation You Are Seeking

HD-18

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

☐ **Primary concern** ☐ Secondary concern ☐ Not 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

If other, please specify

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?

I started prosecuting domestic violence and child abuse cases in Anchorage in the 1980s, when many people still treated them as private family matters. My goal for Alaska is a state where survivors can report abuse, get to safety, and find housing and work without falling into poverty, and where offenders face consequences quickly. The steps I'll take are stable funding for shelters and victim advocates, better rural law enforcement and prosecution capacity, and prevention programs in schools.

I would also protect funding UAA, which trains nurses in forensic examinations so survivors can get a timely, trauma-informed exam close to home. As a prosecutor, I saw how much a well-documented exam can matter at trial. None of

this lasts without a sustainable fiscal plan, which I will keep pushing for.

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

The Legislature makes the criminal laws, but it also decides whether those laws mean anything in practice. State funding makes the difference in whether or not victims see justice. We have to fund troopers, VPSOs, prosecutors, public defenders, courts, shelters and victim advocates.

Prevention efforts can seem squishy, but often start at the earliest parts of a person's life. Without fully funded public education, we can't support the social and emotional learning necessary to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault. We also struggle to make our schools places where students are properly resourced. I am a strong advocate for fully funded public education.

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

As a prosecutor, I took on domestic violence and child abuse cases. These cases included child sexual abuse cases at a time when few male attorneys took them on. It was clear to me then (and now) that these aren't "women's issues" but public health emergencies.

As a legislator, I voted for HB 66 in 2024. That law made it a crime to prevent someone from reporting domestic violence, created the crime of assault in the presence of a child, tightened sex offender registration, and reduced the trauma victims face in grand jury proceedings.

I continue to practice as an attorney and take on domestic violence cases where I represent survivors because this issue is important.

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

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

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

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

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

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ 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?

I spent years as a prosecutor, but I know many survivors never call the police. Alaskans need options that don't rely on legal intervention. Supporting housing and shelters for survivors, civil legal help with protective orders and child custody, and prevention education in schools (as I mentioned above) are some other ways we can build a better support network in our communities.

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

☐ Too harsh ☐ Too soft ☐ **Just right**

What are your reasons?

This is challenging to quantify. There is no one equation to calculate the right amount of time served for a perpetrator relative to the hurt they've done to their victims. What I will say is Alaska strengthened its sexual assault laws in 2019, and even more changes have passed since then. Those changes are good. The problem here is not sentence length — in fact, making sentences too harsh for perpetrators can discourage survivors from reporting the crimes at all, as most people who experience sexual violence experience it at the hands of someone they know.

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

☐ Too harsh ☐ **Too soft** ☐ Just right

What are your reasons?

Here, I think the State could stand to increase penalties. Many repeat offenders still cycle through misdemeanor charges before facing serious consequences. I supported HB66, which made it a crime to interfere with a report of domestic violence. I support exploring stronger consequences for repeat offenders and for violating protective orders.

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. Most people who abuse their partners will eventually be back in the community, often in the same home. If the state does nothing to change their behavior while it has them under supervision, it is choosing to accept the next victim. This is a public safety responsibility, and evidence-based intervention costs less than another prosecution and another incarceration.

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

their partners?

I would require BIPs as a condition of probation and parole, and make them available in rural communities and by remote delivery. I would pair them with substance-use and mental health treatment where needed, and hold participants accountable for completing them. Programs should be coordinated with victim advocates so that survivor safety comes first.

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

☐ Yes ☐ 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?

Housing affordability is a big concern in my district. These are some of my ideas to make more housing available fast:

1. Expand financing tools for construction of housing at all income levels — including low- and mixed-income projects and multi-unit workforce housing — by strengthening the State of Alaska's ability to finance and guarantee construction loans, since the biggest bottleneck in Alaska isn't demand but the cost and risk of building.
2. Invest in the infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, power) that new subdivisions and infill projects need, since land without serviceable infrastructure doesn't turn into housing.
3. Make it easier to build density where people already want to live — particularly in urban cores like downtown Anchorage — by converting vacant buildings into housing and removing regulatory friction for infill and mixed-use development.

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?

As a prosecutor, I watched children be asked to describe abuse to a patrol officer, then a caseworker, then a detective, then a grand jury, and each retelling made it harder on the child and weaker for the case. Alaska's child advocacy centers fix that with a single recorded forensic interview, observed by police and OCS together, so the child tells the story once. State law already directs investigators to work this way. When federal grants for those centers were cut, the Legislature added \$5.5 million to keep them open. I support making that funding permanent in the base budget, so the centers aren't depending on a federal grant that can disappear.

Alaska law already presumes that a parent with a history of domestic violence should not get custody. Judges, custody investigators and guardians ad litem need training to apply it consistently, so that abusers can't use visitation to keep control over the other parent.

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?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

What are your reasons?

CDVSA is how the state funds and sets standards for shelters and victim services statewide. Letting it lapse would disrupt programs that survivors depend on. I would support extending it.

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

See above for my main thoughts. I look forward to working with advocates to learn what solutions they hope the Legislature should prioritize.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey.