



Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE) Best Practices Advisory Group

Meeting Notes Wednesday, July 16, 2025

1.	Call to Order <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff welcomed participants and provided an overview of the agenda.• A quorum of members was not present at the start of the meeting, but quorum was reached later. See page 2 for attendance.
2.	Updates and Report-outs <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kristina Hoffman shared that Washington State Patrol is meeting the 45-day timeframe for sexual assault kit (SAK) testing. The lab is seeking input on a recent State Supreme Court case, Hall-Haught that they anticipate will be impactful. Rather than testimony from the primary scientist who analyzed a SAK, now anyone involved in reviewing the work can also be called to testify. Five to six scientists can be involved in any one case.• Maggi Qerimi reported that the AGO's Sexual Assault Investigation Support Team is following up with local agencies to determine the outcome of cases with CODIS hits. Kit testing generated 4,000 CODIS hits.• Sara Owen provided an update from the Advocacy Subcommittee. The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) will now be advocating on behalf of community sexual assault programs in this time of budgetary shortfalls.• Representative Mendoza inquired about the status of federal and state funds devoted to sexual assault. Participants expressed support for the short-term funding commitments from the State Legislature but noted ongoing struggles due to reduced federal funding and record inflation. It is extremely difficult to operate without predictable, sustained funding. Senator Dhingra stated that the Ways and Means Committee needs to hear about these budgetary impacts. Senate Bill 5362 was intended to provide stability and enable victims' services organizations to engage in long-term planning.• Lauren Vlas shared that a top priority of the Forensic Services Subcommittee is establishing TeleSANE services in Washington.• Sexual assault kits are backordered until the end of August. Harborview will be close to running out.• Andrea Piper-Wentland with the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) remarked that the Legislature required law enforcement agencies applying for a grant under House Bill 2015 to certify that they have achieved a 100% compliance for officers required to complete trauma-informed, gender-based violence investigation training. Gender-based violence training is available online.
3.	Presentation and Discussion with the WA Coalition to End Female Genital Mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absa Samba, WA Coalition to End FGM/C Co-Founder and Advisory Committee member and Caitlin LeMay, Executive Director of the U.S. Network to End FGM/C, presented on work in Washington. See page 4.

4. **Roundtable Discussion and Brainstorm on Crime Victim Rights**
- The group discussed gaps in crime victim rights and how to make victims' experiences accessing rights as easy as possible.
 - Kerry Werner, an Assistant Attorney General working in the Sexually Violent Predator Unit, discussed how victims are affected when cases are brought back up for civil commitment. There is often confusion around victim rights during the civil process. Kyler Steffe, a victim advocate, shared an example – the ability to provide a victim impact statement can be interpreted differently by the victim, judges and defense. There are also many statutes that do not require victim notification (e.g., when an offender changes their name).
 - Kyler has observed that only sexual assault survivors are typically provided a copy of the victim bill of rights, so victims of other crimes often do not even know that they have rights. When the rights are not honored, there isn't an accessible pathway to seek a remedy. Victims would have to go to court and file a compliance order, but there are no templates. Kyra Laughlin added that victims are given their rights before a forensic exam, which is a high-stress time. The form is not an accessible, person-friendly document, which is particularly needed when people are experiencing trauma. Language access is also an issue, as the form is also only available in English and Spanish.
 - Roshelle Cleland noted that Oregon has a more robust, survivor friendly process when rights violated. There are template motions and orders. Colorado and the National Crime Victims Law Institute may also have resources.
 - Kyler pointed out that South Carolina and Arizona have compliance officers for victims' rights.
 - Elizabeth Hendren shared that there are not a lot of victims' rights attorneys, yet attorneys need to be litigating to enforce victims' rights. The few attorneys are continually asked to join task forces. This can be a waste of time because the underlying issue is that there is a shortage of victims' rights attorneys.
 - Northwest Justice Project has sought to represent homicide victims, but ran into questions about whether they have standing to represent them.
 - Maggi Qerimi summed up three interrelated areas for improvement: 1) victims' rights are in different places and are hard to understand; 2) there is missing law that we need to create or strengthen; and 3) there is a need for resources to enforce victims' rights.
 - SAFE can participate in another group to enhance victims' rights, if such a group is formed, but cannot own a process working across crime types.

Attendance			
	Affiliation	Name, Position	Present 7/16/25
1.	Washington State House of Representatives	<<Vacant>>	
2.	Washington State House of Representatives	Representative Gloria Mendoza	Yes
3.	Washington State Senate	Senator Manka Dhingra	Yes
4.	Washington State Senate	<<Vacant>>	
5.	Survivor Representative	Leah Griffin	Yes
6.	Survivor Representative	Nicole Stephens	Yes
7.	Washington State Patrol (WSP)	Kristina Hoffman (DNA Operations Manager)	Yes
8.	Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC)	<<Vacant>>	

9.	Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (WAPA)	Robin Sand (Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Special Assault Unit, Pierce County)	Yes
10.	Washington Defender Association (WDA)	Sarah Hudson (Immigration Project Resource Attorney)	No
11.	Attorney General's Office (AGO)	Maggi Qerimi (Managing Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Justice Division)	Yes
12.	Association of Washington Cities (AWC)	Flora Diaz (Assistant City Attorney, City of Everett)	No
13.	Washington Association of County Officials (WACO)	Timothy Grisham (Deputy Director, WACO)	No
14.	Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs (WCSAP)	<<Vacant>>	
15.	Office of Crime Victims Advocacy (OCVA)	Mikah Semrow (Sexual Assault Section Manager)	Yes
16.	Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA)	Jacqueline Barton True (Vice Pres. of Advocacy and Rural Health)	Yes
17.	Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)	Annette Simpson (Health Program Manager, Harborview Abuse and Trauma Center)	Yes
18.	Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC)	Andrea Piper-Wentland (Sexual Assault Investigations Program Manager)	Yes
19.	Law Enforcement Officer, Rural	Detective Steve Evitt (Wenatchee PD)	No
20.	Law Enforcement Officer, Urban	Sergeant Katie Savage (Everett PD)	No
21.	Prosecuting Attorney, Rural	Anita Petra (Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Benton County)	No
22.	Community-Based Advocate, Rural	Sara Owen (Prevention Program Manager & Advocate, Beyond Survival, Aberdeen)	Yes
23.	Community-Based Advocate, Urban	Carlyn Sampson (Exec. Director, Rebuilding Hope, Tacoma)	Yes

Addressing Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Washington State



Absa Samba - Co-founder, WA Coalition to End FGM/C

Caitlin LeMay - Executive Director, The U.S. End FGM/C Network

What is Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)?



- It refers to all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical purposes (WHO)
- Performed typically on girls between 1 week old to 15 year olds
- In the United States, FGM/C transcends race, religion, or socio-economic status.

Types of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

Type 1:

partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce/clitoral hood

Type 2:

partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without removal of the labia majora

Type 3:

also known as infibulation, this is the narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora, or labia majora, sometimes through stitching, with or without removal of the clitoral prepuce/clitoral hood and glans

Type 4:

all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g., pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area

Why would people practice FGM/C?

Assurance of social status

Sexual restraint or chastity

Improved marriage prospects

Ethnic identity

Religious duty

Aesthetics and morality linked to femininity

Coming of age ritual

In West, cure for masturbation or lesbianism

Health Risks

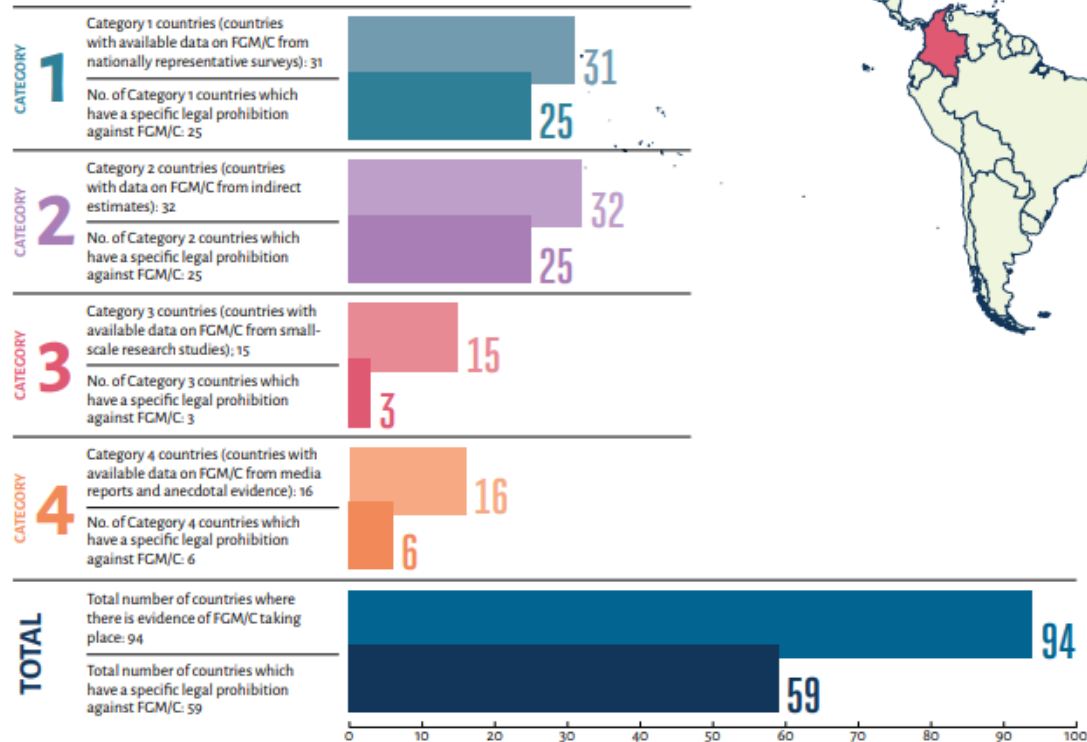
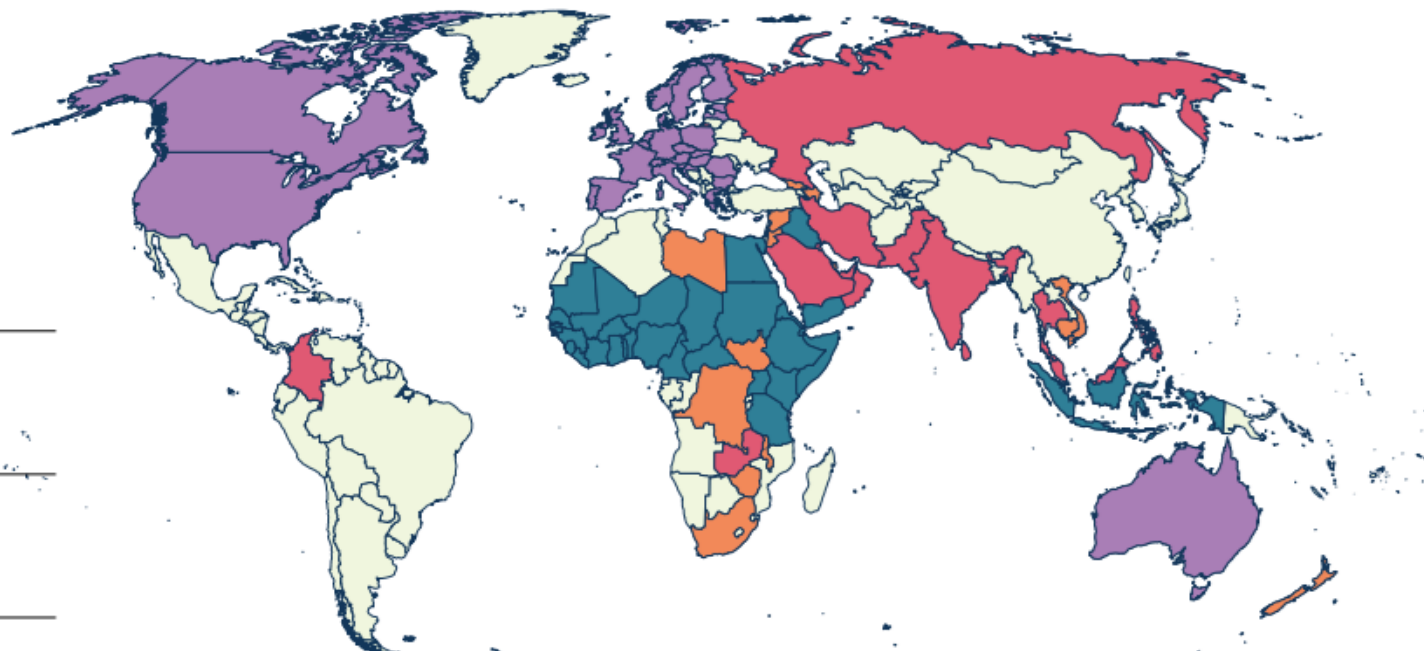
Immediate Complications

- Haemorrhage
- Fever
- Infection
- Urinary problems
- Wound healing problems
- Death

Long-term Complications

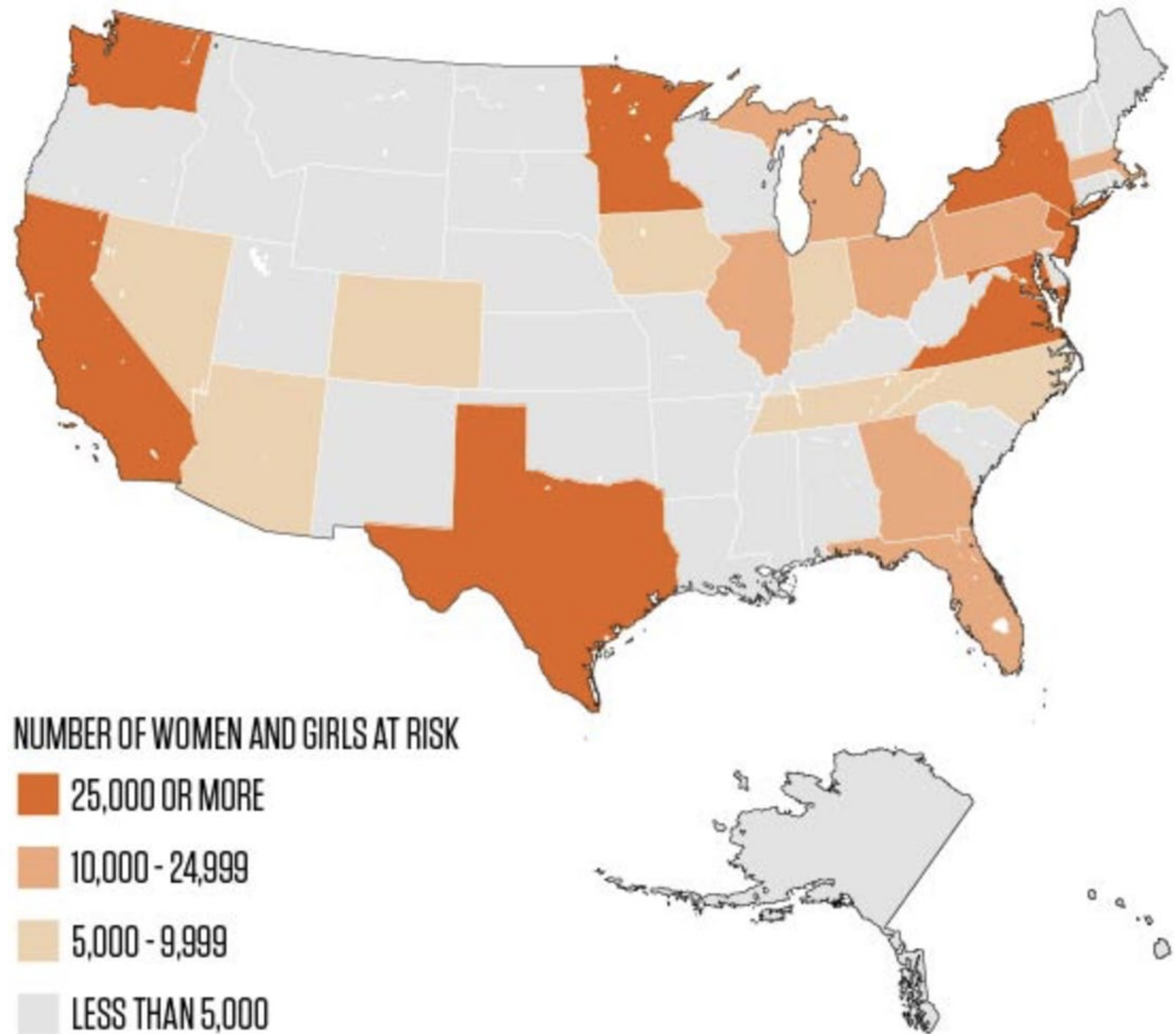
- Urinary or menstrual problems
- Sexual problems
- Scar tissue
- Childbirth complications (e.g. prolonged labor, excessive bleeding, newborn death)
- Psychological problems (e.g. PTSD, low self-esteem)

FGM IS GLOBAL



513,000-577,000

Number of U.S.
Women and Girls
Living with or at Risk
of Undergoing
FGM/C





The Harborview Controversy - 1996

-CIRP-

[Information Pages](#) ▾ [Reference Library](#) ▾ [Research](#) ▾ [News](#) [Literature](#)

Harborview debates issue of circumcision of Muslim girls



SEATTLE TIMES (Seattle, Washington). Friday, 13 September 1996.

Author: Carol M. Ostrom

It started simply enough: a pregnant Somali patient and a doctor in an examining room at [Harborview Medical Center](#). The doctor asked what she thought was a routine question: "If it's a boy, do you want him circumcised?"

"Yes," the Somali woman replied. "But what if it's a girl?"

The refugee woman's question and its implications sent doctors and administrators at Harborview reeling. Circumcision for girls? Surely no doctor would ever consider performing removing healthy tissue, a procedure dubbed by some accounts from Africa and other Third World countries as "female genital mutilation."

And yet, these were women of another culture, a culture the doctors believed they should respect. Soon, some began to listen. And what they heard convinced them that as strongly as a Jewish mother believes her son must be circumcised to be a member of the faith, so do some Somali Muslim refugees in Seattle believe that their daughters' genitals must be cut to comply with their religion and demands of their culture.



NEWS

Wrongly accused of genital cutting, a Muslim mom won't accept 'case closed'

February 15, 2022 1:30 am

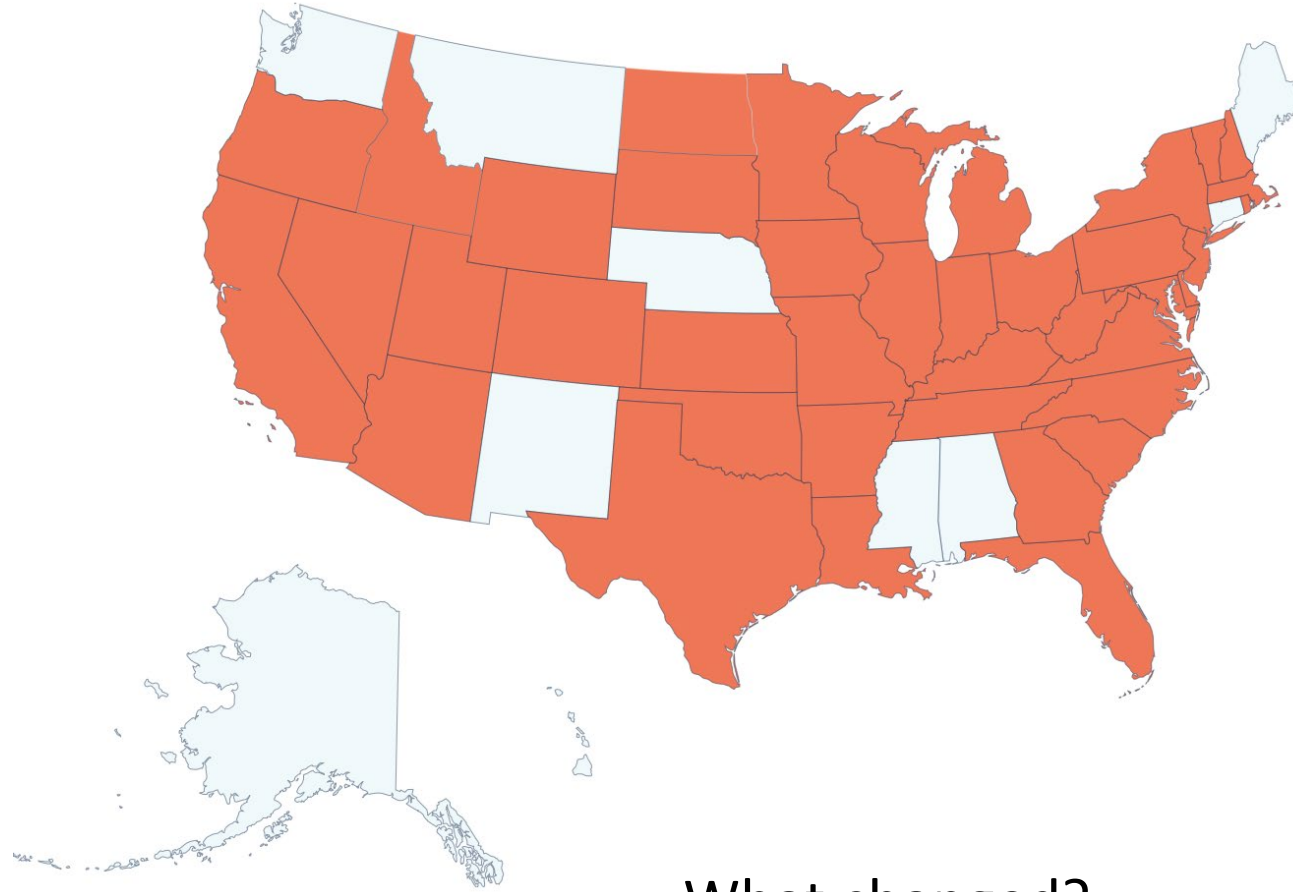


Washington State becomes 41st state to pass law against FGM/C



April 20, 2023

Until 2023, 40 States had Laws Banning FGM – Not including Washington



What changed?

Key Provisions of the Law



- Outreach and Education
- The right for survivor and their families to seek civil remedies
- Criminal Penalties for cutters
- Penalties for Medical Practitioners
- Funding to the DoH to work with community partners to implement
- Statute of Limitations

Implementation

Recommendations for Continued Action

- Include FGM/C in definitions of Violence Against Women and Victims of Crime to ensure survivors and those at risk can access the same services available to impacted communities
- Funding for survivor services eg. medical, mental health, increased obgyn services for FGC, legal services
- Training and Technical Assistance for service providers and first responders
- Community Outreach and Engagement for Prevention

Questions and
Comments!

