

BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

The Quarterly Newsletter of the
Family Violence Law Center's Policy Department



Artists: Visual Arts Academy Magnet Program (VAAMP)
Location: Oakland High School

Contents

FVLC Policy Work - 2

Alameda County Survivor Provider
Coalition - 4

HOME Cohort - 5

Communications Team - 5

Meet Katie Zheng! - 6

Contraction of Rights - 7

“

Who is working on

the reconnaissance

mission for our

individual rights?

FVLC Policy Work

Family Violence Law Center has been actively supporting a number of important state bills and budget requests that promise increased protections and access to resources for gender-based violence survivors. Here are a few:

- **AB 2320 (C. Garcia):** Nashi Gunasekara, Senior Policy Advocate at Family Violence Law Center, is also serving as a Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice (RHRJ) Fellow for the Women's Foundation of California Solis Policy Institute. The RHRJ team is sponsoring AB 2320: The Reproductive Health Clinic Initiative for Innovative Care (RH CLINIC). This bill would establish a pilot program to support California primary care clinics providing reproductive healthcare service through flexible grants. These flexible grants will go towards up to three project areas clinics want to invest in: 1) reproductive justice centered staff training, 2) spoken language translation services for state non-threshold languages, and 3) sustainable partnerships with services agencies like homeless shelters and domestic violence organizations. The pilot program puts experts, clinicians and client-facing staff, in the driver's seat of change to develop practices that are responsive to the specific needs of their patient populations.

SB 914 (Rubio):

otherwise known as "The HELP Act," requires localities to embed a focus on domestic violence survivors and other vulnerable populations into local homelessness plans.

SB 975 (Min):

establishes consumer and credit protections for individuals who have been coerced into taking debt without their knowledge or consent.

AB 2790 (Wicks): modernizes California's medical mandated reporting law for adult violent injuries to better ensure safety and health care access for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

AB 2791 (Bloom): 1) prohibits levying officers from requiring original or "wet" signatures on their instruction form, 2) requires levying officers to accept documents for service by email or fax, and 3) prohibits levying officers to review and re-adjudicate court orders before deciding whether or not to serve them. These additional protections aim to make it easier for survivors to have restraining orders and other court documents served by the sheriff's department or other

SB 1017 (Eggman): expands protections and clarifies legal ambiguities to allow survivors of domestic violence and other violent crimes, who are tenants, to maintain their current housing and avoid eviction.

California Partnership to End Domestic Violence's (CPEDV) Policy Advocacy Day 2022

The CPEDV annually organizes a statewide Policy Advocacy Day for folks to speak directly to California legislative offices about why certain CPEDV-sponsored bills are important to pass.



Title: "There's More to Green than Money" // Artist: Athen B. Gallery
Location: Side of the I. Magnin Building

FVLC regularly participates in Policy Advocacy Day and this year we had a team of five us-policy and direct service staff- lobbying in favor of four CPEDV bills (SB 914, SB 975, SB 1017, and AB 1726) and a \$15 million budget request to support domestic and sexual violence prevention efforts. Our FVLC team was joined by Nancy Lemon, professor at Berkeley Law and director of Berkeley Law's Domestic Violence Clinic and Tracy Lamb, Executive Director at Nurturing Empowerment, Worth, and Safety (NEWS). Representing Northern California and lobbying NorCal legislators, we each spoke directly from our work experiences, highlighting illustrative client stories and disturbing statistics to drive home the need for these bills and funding.

Alameda County Board of Supervisors Budget Advocacy

FVLC has been convening the GBV providers across Alameda County to collaborate on budget advocacy. Alameda County currently spends less than one percent of its budget on responses to GBV in the County. The 2021-22 Budget Statement from the County Administrator's office, indicated that while Alameda County continues to face budgetary challenges from the pandemic and public health emergency, continuity of operations has been maintained, as were core services to our most-vulnerable residents and communities, and the health and safety of County staff. The statement also recognized that the County is guided by our Board's Vision 2026 foundational operating principles of equity, access, fiscal stewardship, sustainability, collaboration, and innovation. The GBV providers across the county

would like to continue partnering with the County to realize that vision and live up to these statements. GBV survivors in the county are some of the most-vulnerable Alameda County residents and deserve equity of access to services and a champion at the Board of Supervisors. FVLC continues to organize with other survivor providers to illuminate the gaps in services and request additional funds to support survivors in the County.

Life Coaching

Bringing more supportive resources for our staff is our top policy priorities for 2022. While the surges in demand for legal and crisis support services have unfortunately not let up, it is important to find ways to support staff wellness amidst the emotional and mental wear of this work. FVLC's Policy Department reached out to Cami Laren, a certified life coach based in Sacramento, about partnering with FVLC to provide wellness and life coaching workshops for our staff. Fortunately, she agreed and we even worked out an agreement to provide pro-bono life coaching services for interested staff! Our first group session was hosted on Wednesday, May 11, 2022 and focused on integrating wellness into our everyday lives. The session was attended by 11 staff members and was well received by many. Our next group workshop will be hosted on May, 25, 2022 and will be a continuation of our initial wellness workshop with an explicit focus on skills building.



Artist: Bay Area Mural Program
Location: 22nd Street, between Broadway and Valley Street

Home Together 2026

In May of this year, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors endorsed the Home Together 2026 Community Plan (the Plan), a 5-year strategic initiative that centers racial equity and lays out the strategies, activities and resources needed to dramatically reduce homelessness in Alameda County. The Plan has four goals: Increasing housing solutions, Preventing homelessness for residents, Connecting people to shelter and direct resources, and Strengthening coordination, communication, and capacity. The Plan aligns with Alameda County's overarching goals to end homelessness and achieve greater equity in the region.

Over the past decade, Alameda County and its cities have seen dramatic increases in homelessness, as well as racial disparities in who experiences homelessness. The Plan builds on the in-depth analysis of Alameda County's homeless response system conducted in 2019-2020, which shows that: African Americans are a severely disproportionate population among the homeless. They experience homelessness at more than four times their representation in the population (47% vs. 11%). Additionally, Native Americans, multiracial people, Hawaiian Native and Pacific Islanders are also overrepresented in

Point-In-Time Count

The Alameda County Point in Time (PIT) Count was held in February 2022. The accuracy of this count is significant because that data is used to determine resource levels for homeless services. The PIT Count measures both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population in the County by census tract and reports the data at the County level. The methodology utilized to gather data for the PIT Count and the frequency of the count are very important policy issues that impact homeless resource distribution. In Alameda County we conduct the PIT Count once every two years, however, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the normal cycle of the count and the conditions of the count. Even with the challenges in the Count under COVID conditions, Alameda County experienced a growth in the unsheltered homeless population from approximately 8000 to nearly 10,000 people. As DV advocates, we continue to press for changes to the methodology that might ensure a more accurate count that does not have embedded gender biases. The current methodology tends to undercount homeless women and homeless youth.

Alameda County Survivor Provider Coalition

The Alameda County Survivor Provider Coalition has been meeting monthly to gain technical assistance as the County's Emergency Housing Voucher program continues to progress. So far, out of the 86 vouchers set aside for GBV survivors, 87 applications have been submitted to Public Housing Authorities, 75 vouchers have been issued, and 32 have been leased up.

Looking forward, the Coalition will discuss advocacy goals, an official name, and logo to further establish



Artist: @nattyrebelart

Location: 3032 Market St Oakland

its collective power in Alameda County's gender-based advocacy space.

HOME Cohort

As the HOME Cohort awaits to be renewed for additional funding, here is a list of all the projects completed:

Within the first quarter of 2021, the HOME Cohort's Advocacy working group teamed up with the California Apartments Association (CAA) to produce an educational webinar on landlords' legal obligations to domestic violence survivors who are tenants. This webinar not only provided insight on California survivor housing law, but it also provided background on domestic violence as a socioeconomic issue. The webinar also listed a few harm reducing do's and don'ts for landlords who may encounter domestic violence within their tenant communities. The webinar is now permanently housed on the CAA's website for members and non-members.

Soon after the HOME Cohort/CAA webinar, the Advocacy team got to work on a California survivor housing lease addendum. The purpose of this addendum was to apprise California tenants of their rights, if they were to become affected by domestic violence. This addendum was a collaborative undertaking, featuring input from survivor, legal, housing, and immigration advocates at the national, state, and local levels. The feedback gathered ranged from language access to implementation. In its final form, the addendum is closely modeled after federal Section 8 housing VAWA notices, but also goes further to list a few gender-based violence resources. The addendum has officially been shared with over 100 California survivor and housing advocates in hopes of voluntary implementation.

In hopes of shifting the public narrative around survivor homelessness, the Communications working group spearheaded a series of focus group discussions to identify the perceptions, feelings, and knowledge gaps people hold around gender-based violence, homelessness, and their intersection. This feedback went on to inform a powerful narrative change toolkit,

created in partnership with Berkeley Media Studies Group, for the HOME Cohort to utilize future advocacy campaigns. The narrative change toolkit features media, messaging, and access strategies for folks to craft more effective public communication skills around domestic violence and homelessness.

The Survey working group is in its final stages of completing its toolkit to support domestic violence survivor providers in partnering with their Continuums of Care (CoCs). This toolkit is informed by data and feedback collected via surveys from multiple CoCs across California. Featuring engagement strategies and additional support resources, this toolkit aims to bridge previously siloed fields in hopes of improving service of homeless survivors.

Finally, the HOME Cohort launched its first Lunch & Learn Series in 2022, engaging advocates across California to gain insight on how to initiate a grassroots advocacy project, leverage data for homelessness program funding, build partnerships with your City stakeholders, and more. The Series was widely attended and even sparked some new working connections among advocates! The Lunch and Learn Series will likely be continued as we begin to look into new projects.

Communications Team

FVLC has been working on narrative change work in the context of how the public views domestic violence and how Gender Based Violence (GBV) advocates talk about these issues. The Policy Department has been heavily engaged in that narrative change and communications work. We want to provide cogent examples of how GBV negatively impacts our communities and offer solutions for survivors in crisis and those survivors who have moved into other stages of rebuilding their lives. We are also interested in including prevention across the lifespan as part of the communications strategy. FVLC is currently building a volunteer communications team to work on this project.

Last, but not least, meet Katie Zheng!

Please meet Katie Zheng- FVLC's newest Policy Department team member! She will be interning with us for the summer to work on a number of policy advocacy projects before the start of her Senior Year of high school. Here is a brief introduction shared by Katie:

*Hello! My name is Katie Zheng, and I am currently a rising senior at Dougherty Valley High School and an intern for Family Violence Law Center. Some of my **favorite hobbies** include participating in mock trial, competitively debating, playing soccer, and reading philosophy. I have been competing in my school's Speech and Debate program for 5 years, captaining the Lincoln Douglas debate team for both my junior and senior years. **It was in the***



debate community that I discovered a love for advocacy and public policy. Testing policy solutions, determining feasibility, and debating effectiveness are just some of the things we partake in in a normal Lincoln Douglas round.

Academically, I am interested in mainly pursuing a political science major in college, but topics such as history, philosophy, critical race theory, and gender studies are also some areas of study I intend to dive deeper into. **My dream job is to work as an advocate in a nonprofit organization and to possibly also provide legal aid for low-income people.** I chose to work at FVLC to slingshot myself towards that goal with some preliminary experience and to give as much as I can with my current skills for those who need immediate relief. **I firmly believe that everyone has an ability to do something, no matter at what age or personal income.** Domestic violence haunts the corners of the world just as much as it does my local community, and the privilege to shelter and safety is not guaranteed to all. Thus, beginning with my work at FVLC, I strive to share that privilege with others as well.

“

*I firmly believe that everyone
has an ability to do something,
no matter at what age or
personal income.*

Contraction of Rights by Tunisia Owens

In response to the recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the continued retraction of our rights we nationwide -- from voting rights to reproductive rights to immigrant rights -- FVLC Policy and Advocacy Manager, Tunisia Owens, offers a few words:

*This year, 2022, has marked a time in history where **Americans are seeing a contraction of individual rights, liberty, and privacy.** American-style Democracy has been well-known for its 'rugged individualism' where the perception is that the government should intervene less in private matters of individuals. Supreme Court decisions for decades have supported the idea that government intervention should occur to protect individual rights, not to eliminate them. **However, the pendulum has begun swinging in the other direction.** First Amendment protections have definitely come under fire. For example the Supreme Court has leaned into permitting law enforcement to violate privacy to conduct searches with questionable evidence, particularly under the guise of 'national security'.*

*President Joe Biden and Democratic lawmakers **pushed for two bills that would set national standards for federal elections.** The Freedom to Vote Act would expand voter registration, expand voting access with guidelines for mail-in voting and early voting, establish Election Day as a federal holiday, and prevent state lawmakers from redrawing districts so as to disadvantage Black voters. Specifically, the bill expands voter registration by including automatic and same-day registration. The legislation would also expand voting access to include vote-by-mail and early voting for more communities. It also limits removing voters from voter rolls.*

*The **John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act** would restore the Justice Department's authority to police election laws in states with a history of discrimination. Protecting voters and potential voters in those states was a key component of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, but the Supreme Court stripped away those protections in 2013. The fight for federal voting rights legislation has been strengthened by a wave of conservative states implementing laws that restrict voter access, and **essentially make it harder to vote, in the name of "election security"**.*

*The recent Supreme Court decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade* will surely curtail abortion rights for some women and severely limit access for many others. At least 26 states in the South and Midwest are likely to immediately restrict abortion or enact a near-total ban since the historic decision has been overturned, according to the Guttmacher Institute, an abortion-rights advocacy research group. Justice Alito, a George W. Bush Supreme Court appointee, vehemently argued that there was no history of a constitutional right to an abortion. Alito also stated that the *Roe* decision "imposed the same highly restrictive regime on the entire Nation, and it effectively struck down the abortion laws of every single state." These statements by Justice Alito feel out of touch with our current reality. Alito's statement about imposing a restrictive regime on the nation smacks of hypocrisy. **This decision is imposing a restrictive regime on all the women in this entire Nation.***

*Our advocacy efforts in the **Policy Department of FVLC have been focused on achieving greater equity and access for survivors in all aspects of their lives.** We are living through a time where more people in California are becoming homeless, there are fewer sustainable economic opportunities to raise a family, housing is less affordable and our ability to make an impact is being hampered by this contraction of rights. These are long-term and far-reaching decisions with Supreme Court Justices and federal judges who receive lifetime appointments. We need to sound the alarm and be very concerned because these decisions are not limited in time or scope. **We need to ask, who is working on the reconnaissance mission for our individual rights?***



Artists: McClymonds High School's 4th period art class x Attitudinal Healing Connection
Location: San Pablo Avenue and 35th Street



Founded in 1978, Family Violence Law Center (FVLC) helps diverse communities in Alameda County heal from domestic violence and sexual assault, advocating for justice and healthy relationships. We provide survivor-centered legal and crisis intervention services, offer prevention education for youth and other community members, and engage in policy work to create systemic change.

In court and in our community, every day.

<http://fvlc.org/> * info@fvlc.org * 1.800.947.8301 (24 hrs./day)