

# BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

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



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## Contents

Welcome Message- page 2

Think Piece - page 2-3

FVLC Policy Work - page 4

Campaigns - page 5

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“Nobody is free  
until everybody's  
free .” -Fannie  
Lou Hamer

# Welcome Message & Think Piece

The winter holidays can be a joyous time spent feeling loved and supported by family and friends. This time of year can also be a time of great reflection as we think about all we have completed or left undone over the course of the year, and we know that the holidays can be a particularly challenging time for those vulnerable to violence and for people in crisis. As the end of 2023 draws near, Family Violence Law Center wants our community to know that we continue supporting survivors during this time: our crisis line operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We also hope our readers see this newsletter as a call to action to join us in policy advocacy work as we combat inflationary pressures and budget cuts. Finally, we hope this newsletter provides a reminder to take rest and care for yourself even as you show compassion and grace to others. Well-rested and rejuvenated stakeholders will be well-positioned to advocate for survivors in the new year.

**Tunisia Owens,**  
**Policy Advocacy Manager , Family Violence Law Center**

## Think Piece

Has the holiday season ever been a difficult time of year for you? It could be due to the loss of a loved one or tension that arises when bringing family together. Holiday season can be filled with warmth, community and connection but it can also bring up past trauma, family conflict and feelings of isolation. All of these are normal and valid experiences and it's important for us to talk about safety and wellness during this time of year and how to support ourselves and one another. Survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual assault are at an increased risk of suicide due to the immense emotional and psychological impact abuse can have. According to a new study led by UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and the [Injury Prevention Research Center](#) (IPRC), "Intimate partner violence is a precursor to 6.1% of all suicides." This is the equivalent to about 462,000 people out of the 7.7 million people living in the San Francisco Bay Area. The hopelessness that can occur as a result of ongoing abuse can lead to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Suicide risk for survivors is a public health concern that we need to address as a whole community.

When family members or friends are experiencing thoughts of suicide, it can be difficult and daunting to figure out how to offer support. Due to the stigma around suicide, sometimes we may dance around the subject due to fear of making the situation worse, not feeling qualified enough, or fear of "planting the idea" in their head. In actuality, avoiding conversations about suicide can bring along more isolation and shame for the person struggling. When we suspect suicide may be

# Think Piece Cont.

involved, it is important for us to ask the person directly, using clear questions such as “Are you having thoughts about suicide?” or “Are you thinking about ending your life?” When someone has the courage to share this with us, it’s important to listen and empathize without judgment or shame. Ensure that any dangerous objects such as pills, firearms, or knives are removed and connect that person to a resource that can provide further support and keep them safe. This can include a suicide hotline (988), mobile crisis support, a therapist or psychiatrist, or the emergency room.

I encourage everyone to lean into these uncomfortable conversations to normalize mental health struggles that many people may experience during their lifetime.

Creating safe space for these conversations, listening without judgment and increasing our awareness of community resources can quite literally save a life.

Alameda County Resources

National Suicide Hotline: 988

Mobile Crisis Team (MCT): (510) 891-5600

Community Assessment and Transport Team (CATT): 911 System Response

## References:

UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. (2022, May 25). New study explores intimate partner violence as precursor to suicide - UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. <https://sph.unc.edu/sph-news/new-study-explores-intimate-partner-violence-as-precursor-to-suicide/>

**Haley Mack**

**Gender Based Violence Educator, Family Violence Law Center**



# FVLC Policy Work

**Policy Work:** Governor Newsom signed many of our bills into law, including AB 28, a tax on the sales of guns and ammo, which will be utilized to carry out educational campaigns around gun safety and gun violence prevention. While we celebrate these historic wins, we are also looking ahead at areas we feel are not receiving enough attention at the statewide level. The FVLC Policy Department is excited to prioritize some key issue areas including: support for system impacted survivors, economic stability for survivors, and the health and wellness of survivors in both short term and long term care. FVLC firmly believes in democratizing our work by sharing in the decision-making process with the entire agency, and the Policy Department operates from a community-engaged policy perspective and seeks the guidance of survivors and direct service staff to inform our work. FVLC's 2024-2026 Policy Priorities are:

- The Health and wellness of survivors, survivor-providers, and survivor's families;
- The intersection between the criminal legal system and domestic violence;
- Housing and homelessness resources and programs; and
- Long-term economic sustainability for survivors.



FVLC Team in Sacramento, advocating for AB 28

**PDV Bonus:** FVLC has partnered with Building Futures to improve the Alameda County homeless services system for domestic violence survivors. The Policy Department has been recruiting and interviewing direct service providers in order to map out the DV housing services system.

**Continuum of Care:** FVLC has been working to ensure access to housing resources and homeless services for survivors of domestic violence, serving on the Leadership Board, the Racial Equity Committee, and the CoC Standards, Compliance and Funding Committee. Additionally, FVLC serves on the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Committee to assist in the homeless count and ensure that data collected provides the most-accurate representation of Alameda County's unhoused population.

# FVLC Campaigns

**FVLC Campaigns:** In the coming year we are excited to continue our work through two of our existing campaigns, Pathways to Safety, which focuses on gun violence prevention in our communities, and Right to Exit, which focuses on creating safety for survivors who are attempting to or have left unsafe living conditions and preventing homelessness. Additionally, we will be launching two new campaigns Freedom to Choose and Surviving Beyond Bars. Freedom to Choose will focus on researching the ways in which the state of California is currently failing survivors of forced marriage and exploring legal avenues of support for those who may be facing forced marriage. Surviving Beyond Bars will focus on exploring current policy practices and pending legislation that can be utilized to advocate for survivors of sexual violence who are behind bars. In all of our campaigns we will be looking to legislation introduced in the new legislative cycle to advocate at the statewide level.

**Domestic Violence Awareness Month Events:** October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and Family Violence Law Center hosted events throughout the month to highlight the experiences of survivors. FVLC's theme for Domestic Violence Awareness Month this year was "Methods for Impacting Survivors' Economic Mobility. Hosted events included conversations with healthcare

providers, bench officers, activists, service providers and survivors themselves. FVLC facilitated conversations about economic mobility for survivors through the lens of health, housing, education, training, reproductive justice, legal and policy change. One of the biggest highlights of DVAM was a film screening of Surviving International Boulevard, held at the Oakland Public Library followed by a panel discussion on human trafficking, economic opportunity, and awareness of ways to interrupt this form of violence.

**Day of Remembrance:** FVLC joined the Alameda County District Attorney's Office in remembering the lives lost due to domestic violence in Alameda county at the Family Justice Center. A beautiful altar was set up for the community to remember all of the lives lost, and to leave kind messages for the families who are hurting. We provided resources around gun violence safety, teen dating violence and how to spot domestic violence in our communities.

**Keep an eye out: Human Trafficking Prevention Month Impactathon:** Learn how tech plays a role in DV, trafficking and violence against women and girls.

**Point in Time count:** enumerating the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population in Alameda County.

**DV System Mapping Project:** domestic violence and housing services in Alameda County.

**Want to help us continue making an impact for survivors in Alameda County?**

*Please consider donating to  
Family Violence Law Center!*

**To donate, click HERE**



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](mailto:info@fvlc.org) \* 1.800.947.8301 (24 hrs./day)**