

# BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

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



"She Got We" by artist Ota Sadeli aka Miss Chelove

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“I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.” — Audre Lorde

# Welcome Message

The term “women’s empowerment” often is used in reference to women who became successful (in traditionally male professions) or ways that women can get themselves out of poverty or [insert large societal problem here]. This use of the term places the impetus for women’s equality on individual women themselves. We are empowered if we are able to be extraordinary and single-handedly battle entrenched systems of inequality.

But when I think about women’s empowerment, I think about the extremes, because we need to look at the darkest corners to understand the actual damage caused when women, or any other group of people, are disempowered. Anyone oppressed by patriarchy can experience a range of types of harm, from discriminatory comments to enslavement. So empowering women does not just mean listening to them talk or encouraging them to aim high, it means eliminating the conditions that leave them disempowered.

Dismantling the patriarchy is the long-term goal, and in the meantime, on a daily basis, we at FVLC take steps to mitigate or eliminate the impacts of our patriarchal system. Gender-based violence often pushes survivors to the edge. Our direct services programs allow us to work with survivors so that they can stabilize financially, remain housed, find therapeutic support, and remain safe. Our policy program lifts up the experiences of individual survivors to change policies and laws so that they better serve their needs. Our youth program educates youth about the impact of patriarchal and other oppressive structures on our interpersonal relationships and trains them to organize and lead conversations about healthy relationships in their communities.

We see small successes, but what we see happens in partnership, with tools to ameliorate or eliminate the real life impacts of oppression on individuals. Most days, it looks like real empowerment.

**Erin Scott**  
**Executive Director**  
**Family Violence Law Center**

# FVLC Policy Work

## **Policy Work:** Legislative Priorities and Goals for 2024

- Health and wellness of survivors and their families, and, survivor service providers;
- Intersection of domestic violence within the criminal legal system;
- Housing and homelessness resources and programs; and
- Long-term economic sustainability for survivors.

**Policy Campaigns:** Family Violence Law Center is pleased to introduce two policy campaigns and one continuing campaign:

**Freedom to Choose:** FVLC is excited to launch a new campaign focusing on forced marriage and its impacts on women and girls in California. Data indicates that forced marriage - when one or both individuals are coerced, threatened or forced into a marriage they are not willing participants in - continues to steadily rise in California and impacts girls as young as 15 years old. Through this campaign, FVLC will work with survivors to research and propose policy recommendations and survivor-centered solutions to the increasing number of forced marriages taking place in California.

**Surviving Beyond Bars:** Surviving Beyond Bars is a new campaign dedicated to shedding light on the plight of incarcerated survivors of

abuse and sexual violence. Our mission is to not only raise awareness but also to advocate for these survivors whose voices often go unheard. Through a multifaceted lens, FVLC aims to explore the harrowing experiences endured during incarceration, confronting the systemic failures that deprive individuals of essential resources such as medical care, access to external advocates, and confidential reporting mechanisms. We also will explore the unique challenges faced by non-citizen women who experience the threat of deportation and transition difficulties post-release, recognizing that the journey does not end upon release. We believe in empowering individuals to reclaim their lives and contribute positively to their communities, and strive to support policies that uphold human rights and ensure fair treatment within all areas of the criminal justice system.

**Right to Exit:** FVLC's ongoing campaign that explores the intersection between domestic violence and homelessness. This campaign will take a *Rights based* perspective to explore how more robust services can help survivors exit abusive relationships and unsafe circumstances. It is our contention that having a substantive legal right to exit (from a home, vehicle, relationship, etc.) means that structures must exist in order to guarantee the freedom to exercise the right. If the structures and systems are not in place or do not function to provide access to

# FVLC Campaigns and Advocacy

necessary services, then the right is of little consequence to those wishing to exit. We hope to shift the paradigm from a theoretical model of the right to exit to an action-based practice of guaranteeing that right with robust services.

**Bills we are following related to DV and resources:** Family Violence Law Center will advocate for a number of issues at the local, state and federal level. Some of our policy work includes:

- **AB 1956 (Reyes) Victim services:** This bill would fill the gap in the federal Victims of Crime Act funding and to prioritize continuity and stability of crime victim services.
- **AB 3127 (McKinnor) Reporting of crimes:** mandated reporters: The bill would require a health practitioner who suspects that a patient has suffered physical injury that is caused by domestic violence to provide brief counseling and a referral to local and national domestic violence or sexual violence advocacy services, as specified.
- **SB-240 (Ochoa Bogh) Surplus State Real Property:** Affordable Housing and Housing for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals: This bill would authorize a local agency or nonprofit affordable housing sponsor to be considered as a potential priority buyer of surplus state real property upon demonstration that the property is to be used by the agency or sponsor for housing for

formerly incarcerated individuals.

**Advocacy Efforts:** FVLC's Policy Team worked with our partner organization Moms Demand Action to advocate for gun safety bills at the State Capitol on March 4, 2024. Supported legislation included:

- **AB 2917: (Asm Zbur) Gun Violence Restraining Orders: Risk Factors and Implementation Updates**
- **AB 2621: (Asm Gabriel) Gun Violence Restraining Orders: Law Enforcement Policies and Training**



Our team met with numerous legislative offices

## A Roof of One's Own

In January 2023, Family Violence Law Center launched the "A Roof of One's Own" pilot project, collaborating with 10 Bay Area organizations including Bay Area Women Against Rape, Building Futures, Women's Daytime Drop-In Center, Love Never Fails, MISSEY, Mujeres Unidas y Activas, SAVE, Shalom Bayit, Tri-Valley Haven and Ruby's

# DV Systems mapping & GBV Providers

Place. The project offers legal information, trainings and services to individuals facing housing instability who faced domestic violence, intimate partner violence, sexual trafficking, stalking, harassment, and/or sexual assault. Since the project's inception, we've received 80 legal referrals, conducted 20 outreach events, and reached 1157 individuals. Our focus includes legal housing assistance, civil restraining orders and limited family law matters. Individuals interested in participating in the program should contact one of the partnering agencies directly to determine eligibility.

**Point in Time count:** FVLC participated in the Point in Time (PIT) count, where members of our community who are unhoused are enumerated. The PIT count is generally held during the last ten days of January when volunteers and shelter staff collect information from the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population in Alameda County.

**DV System Mapping Project:** In our ongoing efforts to support survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, we've conducted a series of interviews with direct service providers assisting survivors in accessing shelter services as well as temporary and permanent housing. Through these conversations, we aim to develop a comprehensive map that empowers survivors in navigating shelter, housing, and other supportive

resources available in Alameda County. This DV system mapping encompasses emergency shelter options, relocation services, temporary housing solutions, and permanent housing services.

**GBV Provider Coalition of Alameda County:** This coalition is advocating for resources to replace the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds that are being reduced as well as additional resources to support survivor safety, this includes emergency shelter and relocation, housing support and services, as well as other necessities for safe living and violence prevention funding.

**HOME Cohort:** Our statewide coalition has been gearing up to support the VOCA funding budget ask efforts being led by Assembly Member Reyes.

**Intern Bio:** Renee is an undergraduate student at Pomona College studying sociology and politics. Her interest in pursuing social justice for marginalized communities sparked her passion for legal and education-based advocacy, where it first manifested in organizing a social justice fair in her city and interning for her school's DEI office. Now, at FVLC, she hopes to expand access to women's rights and social services through policy work.

**Keep an eye out:**

**FVLC Lobby day:** April 30th

**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)**