

BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

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



Weaving Cultures by Sam Kirk, Chicago, Illinois

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“Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.” — Maya Angelou

Welcome Message

There are various perspectives on the expectations for girls and women, including those influenced by the government. During her time as a senator, Vice President Kamala Harris questioned Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh about whether laws exist that would allow government control over the male body. Kavanaugh was unable to provide a clear answer. Unfortunately, societal systems that uphold patriarchy tend to ignore women's experiences and bodies, stifling true feminine wisdom and leading to violence and other challenges arising from an imbalance in feminine and masculine energies.

Women frequently encounter stereotypes, sexual harassment, inequality, and abuse in society and are often denied opportunities for advancement due to maternity leave, childcare duties, and family commitments. Despite this, women have excelled in various fields such as intellectual, philosophical, educational, political, scientific, and athletic pursuits, even though they are not compensated equally compared with their male counterparts. To tackle this issue, women are taking an active role in the fight. They understand that promoting fairness and equality through united efforts is crucial for bringing about genuine transformation. By nurturing a feminist environment that cherishes diversity, honors female wisdom, and amplifies women's voices, they can collaborate to close gender divides. It is crucial to promote and embrace women and girls' inner strength, intuition, and sensitivity, while also challenging societal norms surrounding femininity.

Once patriarchal systems are dismantled and women's resilience and power are acknowledged, society can progress and find healing. As James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey once stated, educating women is vital, as it not only benefits individuals but also families as a whole. The naturally inspiring, collaborative, and supportive nature of feminine wisdom can help build peace and unity, bringing diverse groups together and promoting understanding. Women who embody feminine wisdom are driven to promote peace and unity, acting as a calming force that fosters reconciliation and cooperation among people. Their resilience, compassion, and determination are essential to creating a sustainable and peaceful future.

Naz Kahsai

**Senior Case Manager Specialist
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FVLC Policy Work and Campaigns

Policy Work: The policy department has been advocating for funding to backfill Victims of Crimes Act funding, within Alameda County as well as statewide. We have met with Bay Area legislators and spoke at the Press Conference for AB-2432(Gabriel), a bill that would allow the California to create a permanent funding stream so shortfalls at the federal level do not impact our state's efforts to combat domestic, sexual, and gun violence, and trafficking. Additionally, on April 12th we were invited to present at Senator Skinner's Gun Violence Prevention convening about gun violence prevention resources for k-16 education, including legal avenues available to schools.

Policy Campaigns:

Freedom to Choose: This Spring, the policy team went on over 20 legislative visits to educate California lawmakers about forced marriage and its impacts on Californians. Many of our lawmakers were shocked to learn that our state has an average of close to 9,000 forced marriages involving minors. They also were surprised to learn about the lack of legal support for survivors of forced marriage and our state's narrow and gendered legal perspectives on forced marriage. We look forward to continuing our advocacy around forced marriage in California over the upcoming months!



FVLC staff at the State Capitol

Surviving Beyond Bars: Surviving Beyond Bars is FVLC's public education campaign about the experiences of gender-based violence survivors before, during, and after incarceration. The campaign will leverage videos, infographics, and short-form articles on various media platforms in order to reach a broad audience. We will explore the factors and conditions that often lead to imprisonment, the rights individuals are entitled to while incarcerated, and the programs available to support their journey of reintegration into society upon release.

Right to Exit: FVLC participated on the Point-in-Time Count Planning Team and in the actual count held in January. Our goal was to help Alameda County have the most-accurate count possible. Preliminary data from the Point-in-Time Count reveals that the unhoused population in Oakland continues to grow. The Policy Department will continue to monitor those results and the solutions proposed to address this crisis.

Legislative Advocacy



Legislative visit with our partner agencies

Bills we are following:

- **AB 1956 (Reyes) Victim services:**
This bill would fill the gap in the federal Victims of Crime Act funding and prioritize continuity and stability of crime victim services.
- **SB-554 (Cortese) Restraining orders:**
This bill would expressly state that an individual need not be a resident of the state to file a petition for a restraining order and would allow anyone who has faced harassment or violence at the hands of a resident of the state of California to file a petition for a restraining order against that person.
- **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.

Advocacy Efforts: Our team joined over 200 advocates at the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence's Policy Advocacy day to advocate for state funding to cover the shortfall in federal Victims of Crimes Act funding. Our advocacy efforts resulted in over 10 legislators signing on to the 200 million dollar VOCA backfill budget request championed by Assembly member Eloise Reyes Gomez. Further, our press conference and advocacy efforts were highlighted in the Sacramento Bee's May 1st article: [California crime victims' groups are pressing state lawmakers to restore funding. Here's why.](#)



VOCA rally at the Capitol steps, attended by our staff

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 Place. The project offers legal information,

GBV Providers & Home Cohort

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.

Domestic Violence System Mapping

Project: FVLC's Policy Department has completed the first draft of a domestic violence system map that explores the services available to survivors of various

forms of gender-based violence in Alameda County, and the pathways to access those support services.

Gender-Based Violence Provider

Coalition of Alameda County: FVLC's Policy Department is continuing to engage in collective advocacy efforts to mitigate the severe cuts to the VOCA funding that will cripple services to survivors across the state. These cuts will reduce the number of safe shelters and shelter beds available to survivors who are trying to leave abusive circumstances. Coalition partners are rallying around this issue to find a solution.

HOME Cohort: The HOME Cohort is currently supporting legislation that will allow for renter application fees to be returned should an applicant be denied.

Mural seen in Sacramento CA
Photo taken by Tenisha Keys.



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 * 1.800.947.8301 (24 hrs./day)