

BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

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



WCMU Murals

Contents

- Welcome Message- 2
- Criminalizing Homelessness - 3
- Policy Work & Campaigns- 4
- Legislative Advocacy - 5
- Advocacy & Home Cohort - 6
- Future Events - 7

“Healing takes courage, and we all have courage, even if we have to dig a little to find it.” — Tori Amos

Welcome Message

A Season for Safety and Reflection

The holiday season is often painted as a time of warmth, joy, and togetherness. Yet for many, it can also be a period of heightened stress, unprocessed grief, and emotional vulnerability. For survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), domestic violence (DV), and sexual assault, these challenges can feel even more profound. The holidays may evoke painful memories, resurface trauma, or intensify conflict in environments where safety is already fragile.

At Family Violence Law Center, we recognize the complexities of the holiday season. While it can bring opportunities for connection and celebration, it can also highlight unmet needs, amplify isolation, and exacerbate the challenges of navigating strained relationships. Acknowledging this duality is essential to fostering spaces of safety, understanding, and support for ourselves and those around us.

The Holidays and GBV

GBV doesn't pause for the holidays. In fact, abuse often escalates due to financial pressures, increased alcohol use, and close proximity to abusers. Survivors may encounter additional barriers to seeking help such as societal expectations or family pressures that discourage them from "rocking the boat."

The emotional and psychological toll of GBV during this time can lead to heightened risks of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Survivors may feel trapped, facing a lack of access to supportive networks when they need them most. These realities demand collective action to create environments of empathy, resource-sharing, and sustained support.

How We Can Help

Supporting survivors and loved ones during the holidays requires courage, compassion, and intentionality. Here's how you can make a difference:

Ask Directly and Listen Without Judgment

If you suspect someone is struggling with unsafe circumstances or suicidal thoughts, ask them directly. Questions like "Are you feeling unsafe?" or "Are you thinking about suicide?" open the door for honest conversations. Your willingness to listen without judgment can be life-changing.

Create a Safety Plan

Work with the person to develop a personalized safety plan. This could include identifying safe spaces, emergency contacts, or strategies to exit dangerous situations. For immediate guidance, FVLC's 24-hour crisis line is available at 1-800-947-8301.

Think Piece: Criminalizing Homelessness

Provide Tangible Resources

Connecting survivors with local resources, such as Alameda County's 211 line for emergency services or the 988 national suicide prevention hotline. FVLC can also assist with legal services, including restraining orders.

Offer Practical and Emotional Support

Small acts of kindness -helping with errands, providing childcare, or checking in- can remind survivors they are not alone.

Educate Yourself and Others

Understanding the complexities of GBV and DV makes you a stronger advocate. Share resources, attend workshops, and amplify survivor-centered narratives to combat stigma and misinformation.

Practical Tips for Navigating the Holidays

For survivors, the holidays can be particularly fraught. If you're asking yourself questions like these, know that you're not alone:

- *What should I do if I feel unsafe at a holiday gathering?* Trust your instincts. Create a plan, such as driving your own car so you can leave at any time, or establishing a "safe word" with a trusted friend to signal for help.
- *How can I protect myself and my children if my abuser becomes more volatile during the holidays?* If you're in immediate danger, call 911. For non-emergency support, FVLC's crisis line can guide you in creating a safety plan, finding shelter, or accessing legal services.
- *What resources are available during the holidays when many organizations are closed?* FVLC's crisis line remains open throughout the holiday season. Alameda County's 211 service is also available 24/7 for emergency shelter, food assistance, and more.

A Call to Action

This holiday season, commit to fostering safety and connection- not just for now, but for the long term. Whether through volunteering, spreading awareness, or supporting a friend in crisis, each action strengthens our community.

In this month's newsletter, we're sharing resources and strategies to help navigate the holidays with safety and empowerment:

- **Local Resources:** A guide to shelters, hotlines, and legal assistance in Alameda County.
- **How You Can Help:** Opportunities to volunteer, donate, or advocate for survivors.

Above all, remember: no one deserves violence, control, or fear. Support is always within reach, and FVLC is here to help every step of the way. Together, we can ensure that safety becomes a reality for everyone in our community.

**With care and solidarity,
Family Violence Law Center**

FVLC Policy Work and Campaigns

Policy Work: Each year our Policy Team advocates for various bills that empower and support survivors, youth, and incarcerated individuals. This year our team was able to bring the following bills to the governor's desk, which were signed into law!

SB575 (Wahab) Underage Marriage: This bill would require the State Registrar to create a report containing the number of underage marriage certificates that were submitted by a local registrar, as specified.

AB 1974 (Petrie-Norris) Family conciliation courts: evaluator training: This bill would require that risks associated with access to firearms and ways to reduce those risks be included on the list of issues in family and psychological assessments in DV cases.

SB 1356 (Wahab) Judiciary: training: gender perspectives: This bill would expand the scope of judicial training programs for individuals who perform duties that may involve DV or child custody matters.

AB 2024 (Pacheco) Domestic violence: restraining orders: This bill would prohibit denial of an ex parte restraining order prior to review by a judicial officer for failure or incompleteness relating to ancillary custody, property, or other requests.



FVLC staff and statewide coalition partners meeting with lawmakers in Sacramento.

SB 554 (Cortese) Restraining orders: The bill would expressly state that an individual need not be a resident of the state to file a petition for a restraining order under these provisions.

AB 2422 (Grayson) Department of Financial Protection and Innovation: online resources: financial abuse: domestic violence victims: The bill would authorize the department to, upon appropriation by the Legislature, utilize existing resources and materials from state government departments, nonprofit organizations, and community groups in order to meet the requirement to make the online resources available.

SB 240 (Ochoa Bogh) Surplus State Real Property: Affordable Housing and Housing for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals: This bill would authorize

Legislative Advocacy

a local agency or nonprofit affordable housing sponsor to be considered as a potential priority buyer of surplus state real property upon demonstration the property is to be used by the agency or sponsor for housing for formerly incarcerated individuals.

AB 353 (Jones Sawyer) Incarcerated

Persons: Access to showers: This bill would require incarcerated persons to be permitted to shower at least every other day.

AB-2527 (Bauer-Kahan) Incarceration:

Pregnant Persons: This bill would prohibit pregnant persons incarcerated in state prison from being placed in solitary confinement or restrictive housing units during pregnancy, if known to be pregnant, or for 12 weeks postpartum, as specified.

Policy Campaigns

Freedom to Choose: Over the past several months our team finalized draft bill language to help amend CA Penal Code 265 which prohibits a man from marrying a woman against her will. The law as it stands does not protect men, trans individuals or gender non conforming individuals against forced marriage. After finalizing our bill language we set out to meet with more than 80 elected officials to secure an author for our bill proposal.

Surviving Beyond Bars: In 2025 we look forward to expanding the Surviving Beyond Bars campaign to educate the public on the intersection of the criminal justice system and the experiences of survivors of gender-based violence. Through impactful infographics and short videos on our Instagram platform, [@bebravespeakup](https://www.instagram.com/bebravespeakup), we aim to inform, raise awareness, and inspire action.

Policy Council:

At A Glance: Goals for the January 2025 - September 2026 California Legislative Session

1. Stabilize funding for crime victim services funding, especially through federal advocacy to stabilize the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and through state budget advocacy to provide backfill funding for continuing VOCA shortfalls.
2. Respond to the shifting federal landscape to defend against harmful policy changes and funding reductions that would jeopardize survivor safety and prevention efforts through work at both the federal and state levels.
3. Establish a new funding approach for prevention efforts.
4. Reduce the negative impact of the child welfare system on survivors and their children.
5. Improve housing security for survivors through both legislative and systems advocacy.

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)