

# BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

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



Mural Artist: Unknown

## Contents

Welcome Message- 2

Policy Work & Campaigns- 3

Legislative Advocacy & Home  
Cohort- 4

FVLC Intern Spotlight - 5

Future Events - 6

“

“Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance.”

- Eckhart Tolle

# Welcome Message

The year 2025 has been marked by both successes and by significant policy challenges for survivors of sexual violence. In terms of wins, the State of California has provided some reprieve from the chaos at the Federal level. California passed AB 250, The Justice for Survivors of Sexual Assault Act (Aguiar-Curry), which discourages workplaces from covering up sexual assault by providing survivors with a two-year window to file any claim for damages suffered as the result of a sexual assault that was covered up. California passed AB 49, The California Safe Haven Schools and Child Care Act (Muratsuchi), which prohibits ICE officers from entering schools without approval. California passed AB 969 (Rodriguez), which makes it easier for domestic violence survivors to successfully request CalWORKs accommodations to maintain critical supportive benefits.

Despite these successes, our neighbors and community members continue to experience uncertainty, pain and discomfort resulting from political and economic instability. The Federal government shut down for the longest time in history; SNAP benefits were disrupted, putting millions of food-insecure families at risk; immigration enforcement has been chaotic and cruel; and thousands of Black women have lost jobs this year, resulting in a 7.5% unemployment rate for Black women, when the national unemployment rate is 4.5% and that is a four-year high.

Bearing witness to all of this is heavy. We would like to encourage our readers and supporters to take a breath and to find joy where you can during this time, and we have curated a collection of quotes and affirmations related to gratitude and joy below.

"Every minute of every hour of every day you are making the world, just as you are making yourself, and you might as well do it with generosity and kindness and style."- Rebecca Solnit

"When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed."- Maya Angelou

"The power of finding beauty in the humblest things makes home happy and life lovely."- Louisa May Alcott

I take ownership of my happiness.

I choose calm, peace, and joy

I make space for healthy people who have my well-being in mind.

I release toxic habits that have kept me from experiencing bliss.

I choose to celebrate the good things in my life.

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

# FVLC Policy Work and Campaigns

**Policy Work:** Over the last several months, the policy team has been working tirelessly to help pass AB1134 (Bains), a bill that will amend California Penal code 265 to ensure all individuals are protected against forced marriage regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. This bill will further amend Family Code 2211 to lift the statute of limitations for annulment of forced marriage, which previously held a 4 year statute of limitations.

## **Policy Campaigns:**

**Freedom to Choose:** In Fall 2025, FLVC worked closely with our partners at the Tahirih Justice Center and other coalition partners to draft legislation that would amend the domestic violence restraining order (DVRO) to include victims of forced marriage. If amended, the DVRO would offer remedies to victims of forced marriage, such as preventing removal from the state or country to hold a wedding or removing a minor from school for the purposes of forced marriage. We look forward to working with Asm. Bains to introduce this bill in early Spring 2026!



Pictured above is the Sheltering Survivors team of the Solis Policy Institute (Women's Foundation)

**Bills We are Following:** Each year our Policy Team advocates for bills that empower and support survivors, youth, and incarcerated individuals. This year our team supported 24 bills, 14 of which made it to the governors desk! Here are a few key bills that were brought to the Governors desk, all of which were signed into law!

**AB 1134 (Bains) Coerced Marriage.** This bill authorizes the court to grant permission, upon a showing of good cause, for a party to proceed with a petition for nullity of marriage that is filed beyond the relevant filing period if the party's consent to the marriage was obtained by force.

**AB 260 (Aguilar-Curry) Protecting Access to Medication Abortion:** This bill safeguards access to medication abortion (specifically mifepristone) and provides legal protections for patients and healthcare providers in California against out-of-state legal actions. It was signed into law in September 2025 and took effect immediately as an urgency statute.

# Legislative Advocacy & HOME



**StreetSmARTS Mural by Cameron Moberg, 2018,  
2070 Mission Streett**

## **AB 55 (Bonta) Alternative Birth Center**

**Licensing:** This bill simplifies regulations, clarifies hospital transfer protocols, and ensures better access to perinatal care for families.

## **AB 779 (Lackey) Child Welfare Services: Domestic Violence Consultant Pilot**

**Program:** The bill requires a domestic violence consultant under the program to assist County social workers by providing education on domestic violence dynamics and services and discussing complicating factors and protective measures.

**AB 969 (Rodriguez) CalWORKs: Family Violence Option and Gender-Based Violence Information:** This bill a County to waive a program requirement for a recipient who has been identified as a past or present victim of domestic abuse unless the County has evidence that the requirement would not make it more difficult for the recipient or their children to escape abuse, or that it would not be detrimental or unfairly penalize them.

**Advocacy Efforts:** In October we joined advocates from across the Bay area to meet with Senator Adam Schiff's office. Our joint advocacy efforts hoped to bring attention to the ongoing impacts to HUD funding, which has faced many challenges and delays this year. The delays in releasing the HUD NOFO, have immediate and life altering impacts for survivors who are unable to gain meaningful housing as housing providers wait on federal dollars to arrive.

**HOME Cohort:** On December 9, 2025, our statewide coalition met to close out the year and plan for 2026-2028. We are proud of our wins in retaining ongoing funding for VOCA backfills in California through our yearly Policy Advocacy day. In spring of 2026, we look forward to continue advocating for the needs of domestic violence survivors who are unhoused, and to continue advocating for funding for VOCA across California.

# FVLC Summer Interns

**Intern Intros:** This summer the Policy department brought on four wonderful interns whose work made a meaningful impact at our agency and beyond!

Hello, my name is Isabel Van Sant. Originally from Mendocino County, I am a third-year undergraduate at UC Berkeley studying Political Economy and Environmental Studies. I am passionate about public interest law and policy, particularly as they relate to economic and social justice, so I'm very excited to be able to research policy and write articles regarding powerfully impactful, intersectional social justice and advocacy issues for the Family Violence Law Center!



Hello, my name is Katerina Schoenegger. I am a UC Berkeley graduate in Political Economy and am currently completing my master's degree in Global Security, where my dissertation focuses on gender-based violence in the United States. Previously, I served as a Program Director with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southern Nevada. In that role, I supported 13 clubhouses across the region, designed program plans, facilitated staff trainings, managed data systems, and led organization-wide events serving hundreds of young people. I also bring case management experience as a CASA volunteer and peer coordinator, where I oversaw more than a dozen volunteers, collaborated with the Department of Family Services, and supported youth navigating complex and often traumatic circumstances. Through this work, I directly witnessed the profound impact that domestic violence has on the lives of youth and women, which strengthened my commitment to addressing gender-based violence and contributing to meaningful change in the community. As a policy intern with the Family Violence Law Center, I am gaining actionable insight into the legislative process and the complex ways FVLC staff advocate for survivors of domestic violence. Being part of this work has been an invaluable experience and has deepened my dedication to this field.



# Upcoming Events

Keep an eye out:

- We look forward to seeing you in the Spring!

**Follow us on Social Media!**

**Facebook:** Family Violence Law Center

**Instagram:** @Bebravespeakup

**Twitter/ X:** @FamilyVLC

**Linkedin:** Family Violence Law Center



THIRSRAIL- Artist Didicok, Location: unknown

**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)**