



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

VICTIMS SERVICES NEWS

Winter 2021

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Kristina Vadas, Victims Services Manager

Happy New Year! 2021 is here, although it seems that not much has changed. We continue to experience discord, division, and violence in our country. And the COVID-19 pandemic persists, sickening our colleagues, friends, and families. I shared with someone recently that it's often hard to stay grounded, but I know that it's important to try to remain optimistic and hopeful (on that note, check out the articles by Dione Bassett and Patricia Foster in this newsletter!).

I don't usually make resolutions, but for 2021, I've committed to increased self-care. To sum it up, I want to add more sleep, activity, healthy foods, and "decompression" time. These are all things that I can control, and in this period of unrest and uncertainty, self-care seems more important than ever.

I am also reminding myself to express gratitude—so to all of you, our grantees and partners, I thank you for the work you do. I've been amazed at the creativity and adaptability you've demonstrated over the past ten months, and I am truly grateful to know that you're out there, dedicated to serving and supporting victims.

As always, I welcome your questions, thoughts, and ideas, so please reach out to me at (804) 786-7802 or by email at kristina.vadas@dcjs.virginia.gov. Thank you for all you do to serve and support victims.

Kristina



17th Annual Observance of National Stalking Awareness Month

Tricia Everetts, Victims Services Training Coordinator

January 2021 marked the 17th observance of National Stalking Awareness Month. Stalking Awareness Month was established through the advocacy and collaborative efforts of Debbie Riddle, the National Center for Victims of Crime, and members of U.S. Congress. Debbie became an advocate for stalking victims in honor of her sister, Peggy Klinke. Peggy's former intimate partner relentlessly stalked her after their breakup. He followed and called her incessantly, made and distributed flyers meant to humiliate her, vandalized her mother's home, and set fire to her new partner's house. Despite making numerous reports to the police about the stalking incidents, her former partner persisted in his harassment. As a last resort to stay safe, she

eventually moved across the country while waiting for her stalker to stand trial. Despite her attempts to stay safe, the stalker tracked her down and brutally murdered her. Debbie made it her mission to do something to prevent others from facing the same tragic circumstances. Collaborating with the National Center for Victims of Crime, Representative Heather Wilson (R-NM), and Lifetime Television, Debbie testified at a Congressional briefing. She recounted Peggy's story and requested funding for stalking task forces. Representative Wilson introduced a Congressional Resolution to support National Stalking Awareness Month immediately following Debbie's testimony. The goal of Stalking Awareness Month

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Stalking Awareness Month *(Continued)*

is to increase awareness of the signs and devastating effects of stalking, to motivate individuals and the community to take action to prevent stalking, and to provide support for victims of stalking.

It is estimated that between 6.0 and 7.5 million people in the United States are victims of stalking each year.¹ During their lifetimes, one in six women and one in 17 men will be victimized by a stalker.² Stalking can have devastating effects on an individual's life. Studies show that 46% of individuals who experience stalking report feeling fear about not knowing what will happen next, and 29% report fearing that the stalking will never cease.³ Because of the stalking, one in seven victims ends up moving residences as a means to avoid the stalker.⁴ Numerous studies have demonstrated that stalking victims report high levels of depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, health problems, and feelings of fear and distress.

The Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC) has many resources for both victims of stalking and the professionals who assist them. SPARC's website has documentation logs for victims to record stalking incidents. They also have guides on responding to stalking for advocates, as well as safety planning strategies. Additional resources include stalking response

checklists for victim services agencies and a stalking awareness-training curriculum. These resources are available on [SPARC's website \(www.stalkingawareness.org/victim-service-provider-resources\)](http://www.stalkingawareness.org/victim-service-provider-resources).

The Stalking Harassment Assessment and Risk Profile (SHARP) is a web-based stalking safety assessment found at <https://ukcdar.uky.edu/ls/index.php/57925>. It provides both a risk profile of a stalking situation as well as information about safety planning.

The Tech Safety Center through the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) offers two apps to assist those who are experiencing stalking. First, the Tech Safety App helps individuals identify how technology might be used to stalk or harass them. It also offers safety tips, privacy tips, documenting guidance, and tips on accessing help. To learn more about the Tech Safety App, please visit <https://techsafetyapp.org>. The Tech Safety Center also has the DocuSAFE app available. DocuSAFE provides victims with a way to document stalking incidents and store evidence, such as photographs, harassing messages, or screenshots. If the victim chooses to share this evidence with others, such as law enforcement or prosecutors, the app allows them a way to do so safely. You can learn more about DocuSAFE at www.techsafety.org/docusafe.

STALKING

Stalking and COVID-19

Andrew Kinch, *Victims Services Program Specialist*

Social perils, such as unemployment, homelessness, and hunger, have amplified during the past year beyond health concerns due to COVID-19. Additionally, mandated social distancing and lockdowns produce an environment ripe for a crime like stalking. January was National Stalking Awareness Month, and it is important to know the basic facts of this victimization type. In the current climate, it is also important to be aware of the vulnerabilities that may aid offenders.

According to *Virginia Code* (§ 18.2-60.3), stalking is considered as conduct (on more than one occasion) which places a person, or their family or household member, in reasonable fear of death, sexual assault, or bodily injury.⁵ Stalkers are most often people the victims know. Offenders are often males while victims are most often females.⁶

If individuals are being stalked or think they are being stalked, some of the common steps victims will be asked to take are to trust their instincts and take threats seriously, keep track of all correspondence and actions from the offender(s), tell friends and family, and if planning on reporting to law enforcement, do so as soon as possible. However, in the pandemic, these tasks may come with an increased degree of difficulty to reach safety.

Quarantine orders by governmental bodies throughout the world focused on the task of mitigating the spread of COVID-19, but unfortunately, these restrictions may also include pitfalls that effect victims. Extended periods of seclusion during the pandemic may lead to added

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Stalking and COVID-19 *(Continued)*

opportunities for offenders to track victims, or possibly finding victims closed off from the protections of their social networks due to limited movement.⁷ Furthermore, the confinement of the offender, whether due to remote work options, loss of employment, or furloughed employment, may result in increased stalking behaviors.⁸ These along with other impacts of stalking, such as the compounded harm of individual stalking offenses, increase the intensity of fears that victims may face.⁹

Ultimately, the most important resource for victims' safety is service providers. "Trained advocates can work with you to develop a concrete plan to help you stay safe, understand the law and your rights... connect with other services, and provide emotional support."¹⁰ While the pandemic has exposed some service gaps, the expertise of service providers, mixed with access to multiple technological platforms to increase communication, awareness, and innovation, does most to aid victims of stalking.¹¹

Intimate Partner Violence and COVID-19

Julia Fuller Wilson, State Crisis Response Coordinator and Federal VAWA Grant Administrator

For people living with intimate partner violence, their workplace and the homes of friends and family are often their best access to resources and support and, sometimes, the safest places for them to be. This becomes problematic in the time of COVID-19, where many have lost their jobs, shutdown orders are enforced, and isolation is increased. How do you maintain safety when you are isolated with the person that causes you the most danger? How do you get support when you do not have the ability to see, or even call, others? This is the experience of many survivors of intimate partner violence. It is essentially a pandemic within a pandemic.

What we know is that the rates of intimate partner violence do not decrease simply because there is a national health crisis. In fact, it seems that COVID-19 has created ideal circumstances for perpetrators to increase their power and control. For example, some of the preventative steps that we take to stay healthy make it easier for a perpetrator of violence to control and abuse their partner. Spending more time confined within the home provides more opportunity to abuse. The lack of support and resources readily available creates an isolation that decreases a survivor's ability to seek help. In addition, if a survivor loses their job, they may become more financially dependent on their partner, which can create a dynamic that promotes economic abuse. For children, virtual schooling can increase rates of food insecurity and instances of unreported child abuse and neglect.¹²

Survivors may feel like they have nowhere to turn. They may not have the means to safely reach out for help. In fact, domestic violence hotlines in some areas have reported that their calls have decreased by 50%.¹³ So how do we overcome these barriers for survivors? How do we increase safety for survivors that cannot come into our office or call our hotline for assistance?

Many solutions involve collaborating with traditional and nontraditional community partners and redesigning outreach efforts to make those vital connections. Pandemic or not, there are some services, providers, and resources that survivors still access that can be the link to domestic violence services. Some domestic violence programs have revved up their efforts to reach doctors in their area. By ensuring that doctors are systematically screening their patients for intimate partner violence, the medical system can increase victim safety. By working with local pharmacies, dentists, veterinarians, food banks, and supermarkets, local domestic violence programs can utilize them as conduits to promote the safe access to resources and services. In addition, teachers can utilize some of their parent-teacher conference time to check in on the safety and wellbeing of the child and the family.

In these times, when our world is turned upside down, domestic violence and child advocates must think of novel, and sometimes unorthodox, ways to reach those that are most at risk. We must understand the barriers that face survivors, build community connections, create strong alliances with essential workers that encounter survivors, and educate the community about how they can access resources safely. As survivors navigate their daily lives with less support and more isolation, creating a safety net is vital for survivors, now more than ever.



The PERK Tracking System: A Tool to Empower Sexual Assault Survivors in Virginia

Jennifer Kline, *Improving Criminal Justice Responses Program Coordinator*

Sexual assault victims often experience feelings of loss of control that continue long after the assault. Helping victims get their control back can begin the healing process. One way to do that is to keep victims informed about their case. Virginia is doing precisely that with the new Physical Evidence Recovery Kit (PERK) Tracking System. The system is a secure website that will allow survivors, the Virginia Department of Forensic Science (DFS), law enforcement agencies, and medical facilities to know the status and location of a PERK at each stage of the process.

In the past, victims of sexual assault who chose to undergo a PERK often had no idea whether their kit had even been tested. Now, victims can learn the status of their kits on their computer or cell phone. The process starts at the medical facility where the forensic medical exam is conducted. Victims are provided a PERK number by the medical facility staff, and if they choose to report the assault to police, will then be given a PIN by the law enforcement agency investigating the crime. Victims use those two numbers to log onto the website in order to track the PERK.

Victims who do not choose to report sexual assault to law enforcement can still receive a forensic medical exam that includes a PERK. Those victims are still issued a PERK number which would track where the kit is stored and when it will be destroyed. This allows victims to know how long they have before the evidence is destroyed, so they can make informed decisions about reporting to law enforcement.

The system went live on July 1, 2020, and is mandatory in Virginia. The PERK must be sent for analysis to DFS within 60 days of the law enforcement agency receiving the kit. If it is not sent, the agency who has custody of the PERK must submit a reason electronically via the website. It is mandatory for law enforcement and health care providers to enter information into the system and for health care providers to notify victims about the system and provide the PERK ID number.

It is important that everyone on the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) understand the tracking system and your team's process in order to inform victims and answer their questions. When all of the SART players have a good understanding of the process, they can give victims consistent information which helps with transparency and trust, maintaining victim engagement in the criminal justice system. Therefore, use a SART meeting to discuss the PERK Tracking System. By the end of that meeting, everyone on your team should be able to answer these questions: Whose role is it to inform the victim about the PERK Tracking System? What is our team's procedure in assigning PERK numbers and PIN numbers? What resources are needed to educate victims about the tracking system? Is our protocol trauma-informed? Include this procedure in your team's written protocol or MOU and train other allied professionals about your SART's protocol.

For more information: www.dfs.virginia.gov/field-test-kits/perks/perk-tracking-system

For the PERK Tracking System: <http://perk.dfs.virginia.gov>

Victim Advocacy organizations that would like training on the PERK Tracking System can contact Teri Duesbery, Office of the Attorney General, at TDuesbery@oag.state.va.us.

DFS offers video training for law enforcement and collection sites. Contact PERK Tracking System Coordinator Madison Boden at perktracking@dfs.virginia.gov for more information.



What is Technology-Facilitated Abuse?

Chrissy Smith, *Victims Services Grant Program Specialist*

Recent additions to the crime glossary include sextortion, nonconsensual pornography, cyberstalking, doxing, and swatting. A panel of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Priority Criminal Justice Needs Initiative has released their recommendations on combatting “technology-facilitated abuse.” They define technology-facilitated abuse as “an abusive or harmful act or course of conduct facilitated through digital media (e.g., websites, social networking platforms, dating sites, apps, blogs, online games, instant messages, email) and targeted either directly or indirectly at a particular person or group of persons, often (but not always) with the

intent to cause emotional distress, reputational damage, and/or fear for personal safety.”

The increasing access to the dark web, anonymous cell phone apps and lack of public awareness makes this crime more difficult to investigate and prosecute.

The increasing access to the dark web, anonymous cell phone apps and lack of public awareness makes this crime more difficult to investigate and prosecute. Simply identifying jurisdiction is often a complex task and could require the victim to report the crime to multiple law enforcement agencies, or result in the victim disengaging from the criminal justice process. The panel cited 21 priority needs in four categories: public education and prevention efforts; awareness

among criminal justice practitioners; improving criminal justice practices and policies; and mitigating harm and empowering victims.

To learn more about the study, “Ranking Needs for Fighting Digital Abuse: Sextortion, Swatting, Doxing, Cyberstalking and Nonconsensual Pornography,” visit NIJ’s website:

<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/ranking-needs-fighting-digital-abuse-sextortion-swatting-doxing-cyberstalking>

The Importance of Resiliency

Patricia Foster, *Victim Witness Coordinator*

The current circumstances have caused all of us to draw strength from within and from those around us. Why is it so important to have resiliency? There are many answers to this question. While in elementary school, a classmate took an embarrassing fall in front of the whole school while trying to do a good deed. When we walked home from the bus stop, she was still upset at the fall and the ridicule that came from our peers. We arrived at her grandmother’s and she inquired how our day had been. My friend described the teasing she had received from her fall. Her grandmother quickly and sternly relayed that she had to focus on the recovery. She questioned: Did you get up? Did you lay there? Did you cry? My friend responded that she did get up. Her grandmother said “then you recovered. Had you been still laying there, then I would be concerned.” Her grandmother exited the carport and left us to our after school porch swing.

While this example is “elementary,” it is foundational. There is always going to be something we are recovering from to build resiliency. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the definition of resilience means to leap or spring back, to rebound, to recoil, and to shrink from. Without resiliency we stay bound to the position the problem has reduced us to. The thought of “bouncing back” sounds daunting but it is necessary. It is necessary to get up—cry if you must, but get up. The pandemic has found us all practicing resiliency more than ever. Look at counting the small steps to the big ones as wins.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Online Grant Management System

As you may know, DCJS is launching a new Online Grant Management System (OGMS). OGMS is scheduled to go live in February 2021. This new system will provide sub-recipients with a more streamlined application and grant management process. For the first phase of implementation, we are transitioning a select number of DCJS grants to include two Victims Services grant programs:

- VSTOP-Violence Against Women Grants
Start DateJanuary 1, 2021
- SASP-Sexual Assault Services Program Grants
Start DateJanuary 1, 2021

The remaining Victims Services programs will migrate to OGMS in phases. You will be notified via e-mail with explicit instructions when your grant program transitions to the new system. Until that time, please continue to utilize GMIS for all grant reporting, actions, and requests. If you did not receive a notification from DCJS, please do not register in OGMS at this time.

DCJS is committed to keeping all constituents informed to ensure a smooth transition for everyone, and we will continue to notify programs via email for updates.

DCJS is offering four opportunities for sub-recipients to learn more about the functionality of the new grants management system. The training is open to everyone. We strongly encourage authorized grant officials and key staff who are responsible for managing the DCJS award to attend. The training series "Getting Started with OGMS" will offer participants an overview of the new grants management system, basic features and functions to manage your DCJS grant award, system terminology, a step-by-step demonstration on how to register and manage users, submit and negotiate grant applications, and grant tracking (which includes post-award functions including programmatic and financial reporting, budget amendments, reimbursement claims, etc.). The training will be presented by Dulles Technologies and the DCJS OGMS Project Team. The sessions will be recorded and posted to the DCJS website after the last training concludes.

Congratulations to One of Our Partners



Morgan Abbate

The Improving Criminal Justice Responses (ICJR) Partnership (DCJS, Office of the Attorney General, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Virginia Poverty Law Center, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, and Virginia Victim Assistance Network) is pleased to announce that

team partner, Morgan Abbate, Senior Victim Advocate at the Office of the Attorney General, is the 2020 recipient of the [The David M. Sargent Lethality Assessment Program \(LAP\) Award](#). This national award recognizes professionals who are doing exceptional work in homicide reduction through the vehicle

of the LAP. Morgan was chosen to receive this award for her exemplary dedication to the coordination and implementation of the statewide Lethality Assessment Program. Morgan has gone above and beyond to develop a technical assistance and training program in Virginia to educate localities in Lethality Assessment best-practices and to enhance LAP partnerships across Virginia. Her actions have resulted in safer communities in Virginia. Congratulations, Morgan!



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Staff Spotlight: Andi Martin— *Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence Program Coordinator*



Share a little about your educational and professional background.

I graduated from Mary Washington College with a bachelor's degree in political science. I went on to earn a master's degree in criminal justice

from Virginia Commonwealth University. After graduate school, the Virginia Office of Attorney General (OAG) started its Victim Notification Program and I was hired as the Program Assistant. A few years later, my husband and I took a big leap of faith and moved across the country to my home state, Colorado. For the next 18 years, I continued working in the victim assistance field. I was a victim/witness assistant for three years, a law enforcement victim assistance coordinator for 11 years, and the State Victim Rights Act Specialist for four years. In 2017, we took another HUGE leap of faith and brought our family (now two people larger) back to Richmond, Virginia. And do you know where I got a job? In the OAG Victim Notification Program. Incredible. This time, in addition to appellate notifications, I also coordinated the Lethality Assessment Program and made victim notifications for the state's sexually violent predator process. My career has always been incredibly rewarding but ever since the early days in my first OAG job, I always wanted to work for DCJS.

What is your role at DCJS?

In January 2019, I was hired as the DCJS Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence Program Coordinator. I am the Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP) grant administrator for Virginia, and I co-coordinate the Victims Services Grant Program (VSGP) with our VOCA Administrator. This means I apply for federal SASP funds and report on Virginia's SASP services. I also develop and run the SASP and VSGP grant processes, and I participate in various statewide workgroups that address sexual and/or domestic violence. For example, the SART Advisory Committee, Underserved Populations Advisory Committee, and the VAdata Data Systems Advisory Committee.

Why were you interested in working for Victims Services at DCJS?

I enjoy the victim services field. It is incredibly rewarding and I have consistently worked with the most wonderful people. Ever since my days at the OAG (the first time), I knew I wanted to work on behalf of crime victims, and ever since being on the receiving end of DCJS's support back then, I knew I wanted to work here at DCJS.

What do you enjoy most about your work at DCJS?

Aside from my incredible coworkers, the best part of DCJS is having the space, trust, and encouragement from leadership to grow myself and the projects and programs I coordinate. This space allows me to be more creative than any previous job I have held. I am so grateful to be able to improve myself even 24 years into this field.

What has been your proudest accomplishment at DCJS?

This may make you smile. This may make you cringe. My proudest accomplishment was developing the VSGP FY 22–23 solicitation. I starting planning over one year in advance of its release by identifying ways to improve the previous solicitation. Then I sought and received feedback from subgrantees about our grant application process. Then I researched other states and started drafting forms. For about nine months, I ran bi-weekly and then weekly planning meetings to include the deep knowledge and experience of my co-workers. I learned a lot about Excel formatting, and in the end, I kept to my deadline. This project was made very challenging by the decrease to our federal VOCA award. I sincerely hope all the effort I put into the process made it better for all the applicants.

Prior to working at DCJS, what is the most unusual or interesting job you have had?

While at the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, as the Victim Rights Act Specialist, I processed Victim Rights complaints. Crime victims in Colorado can file a complaint on just about anyone in the criminal justice system (even judges!) when they believe their victim rights, as established by the Colorado State Constitution, have been violated. If it is determined that a person or agency violated the rights of the victim, the person or the agency is required to take steps to ensure no further

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Staff Spotlight

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violations. This was challenging work and it was adversarial at times, but I enjoyed strengthening the system for future victims.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a geologist. I grew up in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and I loved exploring the amazing red-rock formations in my backyard. I also enjoyed collecting various types of quartz. I think there may still be a shoebox of quartz samples in my mom's garage.

If you could only vacation one place for the rest of your life, where would it be and why?

First let's assume I get to retire to the peaceful, beautiful, majestic Rocky Mountains. Pine trees, hummingbirds, wildflowers and big blue sky are just a few reasons I would love to retire there. As for vacationing from the mountains, I will go to my second favorite part of the world, the Outer Banks of North Carolina! From Manteo down to Hatteras Island, I love it there.

What would you title the autobiography of your life?

The title of my autobiography would be, Que Sera, Sera (Translated: What will be, will be). My mom sang this song all the time when I was young and she would repeat it whenever I was worried. It is a bit of a mantra for me now.



Helpful DCJS Victims Services Links:

- [Victims Services Grants](#)
- [Grants Management Resources](#)
- [Forms](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Professional Standards](#)
- [Victims Services Staff](#)

WELCOME

Welcome Our Newest Team Members

DCJS Victims Services is pleased to introduce you to our newest team members: Haymanot Cummings and Erin Osiol. They have joined the team as Victims Services Program Specialists.



Haymanot Cummings, a recent transplant from Florida, is one of two new Victims Services Grant Monitors and brings a wealth of human services and victim services related grant experience. After receiving her Master's Degree in Public

Administration from Florida State, she worked as a Grants Program Administrator at the Florida Attorney General's office, which included managing their administration of VOCA grants. She also administered grants and contracts for the Florida Department of Children and Families and Virginia Commonwealth University. She is currently pursuing a Project Management Professional certification.



Erin Osiol is returning to DCJS as a Victims Services Grant Monitor, with a host of non-profit management experience that will be valuable to our team. Some of you may remember Erin, who went by Erin Osborne, when she first started

at DCJS as a Master of Social Work student intern working with Melissa O'Neill, and later as part of the Victims Services team. Erin has worked in different grants, victims, or program management related positions at the Department of Health, Virginia Health Care Foundation, YWCA of Richmond, and the Partnership for Nonprofit Excellence. For the past several years, Erin has run her own massage studio, specializing in massage therapy for anxiety, trauma, and pain.

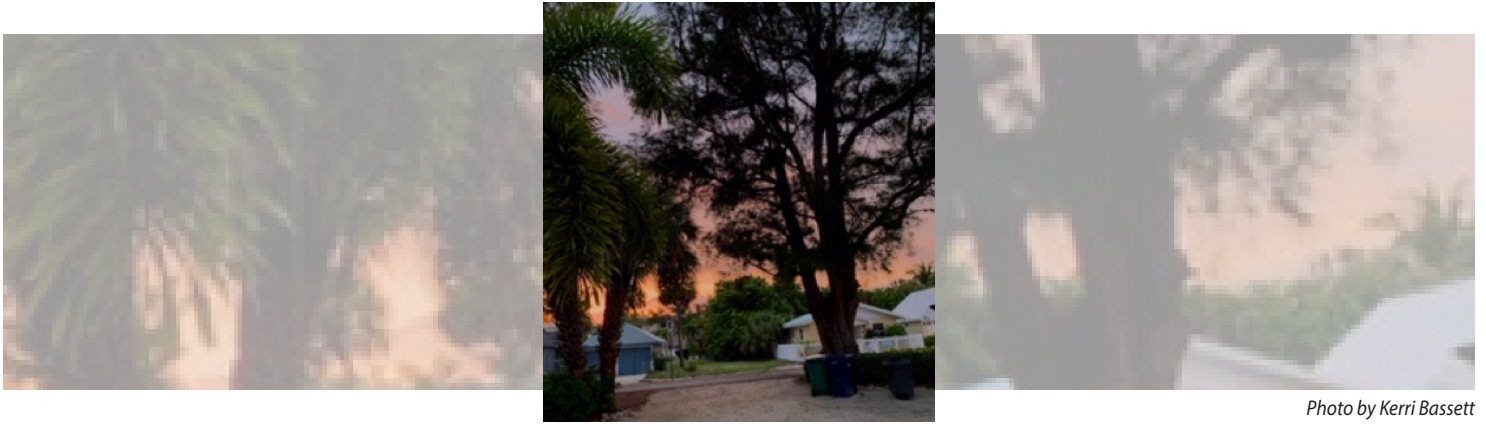


Photo by Kerri Bassett

Meditation and Trauma Survivors

Dione Bassett, *Victims Services Program Specialist*

Meditation is tuning into our thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations and doing so without judgement. The practice of meditation teaches us to become mindful and to expand our awareness. Meditation has the potential to help trauma survivors by reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression, improve cognitive functions, manage emotional reactivity, and provide grounding in the present moment. After a traumatic event, our emotional brain can be overtaken by the past. Meditation gives us a tool to notice our thoughts, feelings, and sensations but not be swept away by them. When we ask ourselves “what am I doing?” and “why am I doing it?” our minds open. This is self-awareness. It’s important to be self-aware and not self-conscious. Self-conscious is when the mind constantly worries and wonders about itself. When you are self-aware, you are fully within yourself; not outside yourself looking in.

In preparing for this article, I discovered the [Mindful Awareness Research Center \(MARC\)](#), which is a partner of the Norman Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology within the Jane and Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA. MARC’s mission is to “foster mindful awareness across the lifespan through education and research to promote well-being and a more compassionate society”. This is an excerpt from their website:

Contemporary culture in the United States is marked by extraordinary advances in science and technology, yet coupled with these advances is an increasing sense of pressure, complexity and information overload. Individuals across the lifespan are feeling tremendous stress, which is contributing to a variety of mental and physical health problems and diseases.

Mindful awareness can be defined as paying attention to present moment experiences with openness, curiosity, and a willingness to be with what is. It is an excellent antidote to the stresses of modern times. It invites us to stop, breathe, observe, and connect with one’s inner experience. There are many ways to bring mindfulness into one’s life, such as meditation, yoga, art, or time in nature. Mindfulness can be trained systematically, and can be implemented in daily life, by people of any age, profession or background.

MARC was created to bring to a renowned mental health research institution to the ancient art of mindful awareness in a scientifically supported and rigorous form.

Meditation can help build a buffer from strong emotions and create peace for trauma survivors. “Beautiful stones are not quite seeable under the rush of the river’s face. Only when we can still the river of the world, do things become extraordinary and clear” (*The Book of Awakening* by Mark Nepo).

Today, in this moment, try this:

- Close your eyes or drop your gaze. Begin to check out of the outer world and into the inner world.
- Breathe slowly. Meditate on being receptive. Inhale. Exhale.
- As you go through your day, give your energy to listening.
- As you hear the stories of others, acknowledge your own story.
- If you can, offer a thread of your own story as a gift in return.



Local Agency Spotlight: Pivoting Services During COVID-19

Mental Health America of Virginia

Chrissy Wengloski, Victims Services Grant Program Specialist

As we begin 2021, we know that so many victim serving organizations across the state have struggled and persevered through the challenges of serving victims during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this edition of our newsletter, we are spotlighting a local agency who successfully reimagined a grant-funded project that was intended to be entirely based on in-person group gatherings. This agency has worked incredibly hard to make sure they are continuing to serve victims of crime in this difficult time.

Mental Health America of Virginia, a Victims Services Grant Program (VSGP) recipient, has a grant-funded project with the goal to strengthen the resiliency of crime victims who have experienced mental trauma. The project originally included three-day peer recovery programs in different regions of the state, with ten people in each program. The retreat-style curriculum would be led by Certified Peer Recovery Specialists at a facility with overnight accommodations, and daytime and evening support activities for participants. Part of the project also included outreach through statewide meetings or conferences to other professionals who might find that the programs could supplement their work with survivors of crime and trauma.

Despite having new staff hired and excitement to support these programs, COVID-19 halted all in-person programs. In the face of an unprecedented situation, Mental Health America of Virginia was able to create and conduct a virtual version of the retreat by adapting select modules from the curriculum, combining them with opportunities for discussion, activities and breaks over a five-hour period. They kept the intimate setting by limiting virtual attendance to 20 people. They also provided exhibit materials for virtual conferences, as well as co-sponsored resiliency trainings, which allowed the agency to continue their outreach work. Finally, while they are not able to meet with crime victims in person or as often virtually as they would like, the organization has been sharing journal prompts on social media multiple times per week that help survivors of trauma and crime process their emotions through writing.

Mental Health America of Virginia's work to pivot their goals of serving victims of crime and trauma is a great example of the passion and commitment behind Virginia's victim serving organizations. We are grateful for all of the programs that have worked so hard on behalf of victims throughout 2020 and will continue in the future.

Defining Services in VSDVVF Reporting

Tierra Smith, VSTOP and VSDVVF Grant Program Coordinator

In 2004, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation creating the Virginia Domestic Violence Victim Fund. In 2006, the Virginia General Assembly passed additional legislation changing the name of the fund from the Virginia Domestic Violence Victim Fund to the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Victim Fund (VSDVVF). DCJS was designated as the administering agency for this fund, and state special funds support the VSDVVF grant program. The amount available to award as grants each year is dependent upon deposits into the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Victim Fund. The purpose of the VSDVVF grant program is to provide funding to assist in protecting and providing necessary services to

victims and children affected by sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking, and family abuse.

Recipients of these grant funds are required to complete four quarterly progress reports via the appropriate reporting form. Within these reports, grantees provide DCJS with figures of their service delivery as it relates to the goals and objectives within their approved grant program.

To ensure accurate reporting, grantees will want to assess how certain crime types may be defined and counted under the current VSDVVF guidelines. Recently, the Victims

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Defining Services in VSDVVF Reporting *(Continued)*

Services team has received inquiries regarding counting “sex trafficking” as sexual assault, as this term is not explicitly mentioned within the current guidance. The *Code* for Discretionary Programs, last updated in February 2006, states:

“Sexual assault is a continuum of behaviors that includes sexual assaults committed by offenders who are strangers to the victim and sexual assaults committed by offenders who are known to, related by blood or marriage to, or in a dating relationship with the victim. Sexual assault includes knowingly causing another person to engage in a sexual act by using force against that other person or by threatening or placing that other person in fear. It also includes engaging in a sexual act with another person after knowingly rendering that person unconscious, or administering to another person by force or threat of force, or without the knowledge or permission of that person, a drug, intoxicant, or other similar substance and thereby substantially impairing the ability of that other person to appraise or control sexual conduct. Sexual assault also includes knowingly engaging in a sexual act with another person if that other person is incapable of appraising the nature of the conduct or is physically incapable of declining participation in or communicating unwillingness to engage in that sexual act. Sexual assault also includes knowingly engaging in sexual contact with another person without the other person’s permission. Information on services provided to victims/survivors who experienced attempts to commit any of the above-listed acts should also be included in this report.”

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), “Sex Trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age” (22 USC § 7102).

Given the definition indicated by the VSDVVF guidance and provided on NSVRC’s website, it is advised that yes, assisting with sex trafficking can be a service counted under sexual assault when completing the VSDVVF Quarterly Progress Report. At this time, the VSDVVF grant program is in a continuation year and programs are receiving level funding. Additional information on the next solicitation will be released soon. If you warrant any additional support or assistance, please contact your assigned grant monitor or the VSDVVF Grant Program Coordinator, Tierra Smith at tierra.smith@dcjs.virginia.gov.

References

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Victim Fund (2020). Retrieved from: www.dcjs.virginia.gov/victims-services/grants/virginia-sexual-domestic-violence-victim-fund

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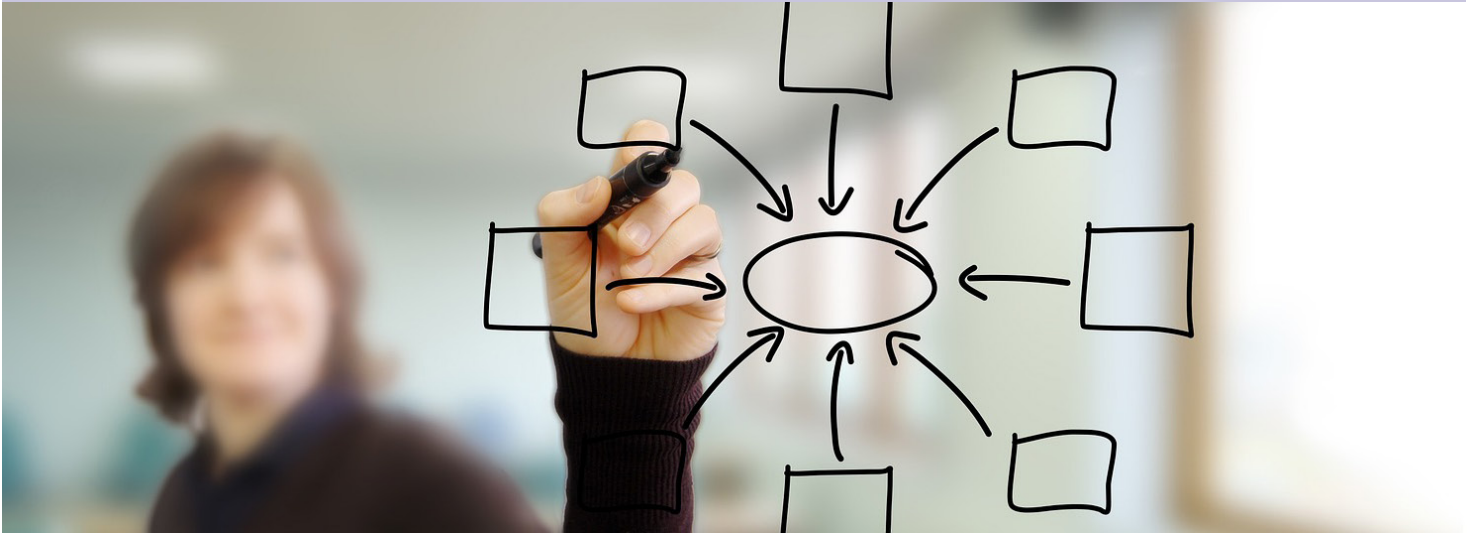


**Be the beacon of light in
someone's darkness.**

–Randi Fine

Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) Training Update: Virtual Train-the-Trainer Series Held in December 2020

Chad Felts, *Victims Services Grant Program Specialist*



The Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) is an innovative evidence-based strategy designed to prevent domestic violence and intimate partner homicides and serious injuries. The program provides law enforcement agencies and their community partners with an easy and effective method of identifying victims of domestic violence who are at the highest risk of being seriously injured or killed by their intimate partners, and then providing those victims with access to help and assistance. LAP consists of a standardized questionnaire that helps first responders identify and assist these high-danger victims. The Virginia, Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), and the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance comprise the statewide LAP Team.

The statewide LAP Team is tasked with the responsibility of training new law enforcement agencies and their partnering domestic violence service providers who have made the important decision to enact LAP in their jurisdictions. Following an application process that includes the development of policies and procedures for program implementation, the final step before “going live” with LAP is an in-depth training of sworn staff, department leadership, and employees of the domestic violence agency who will be responsible for coverage of the telephone hotline.

The statewide LAP Team accomplishes this requirement by providing intensive train-the-trainer instruction to the new LAP partners, thereby allowing those agency and program

representatives to, in turn, educate their coworkers and prepare for jurisdiction-wide LAP implementation. Due to COVID-19, travel and training restrictions prevented the LAP Team from hosting these important events in person throughout 2020, as in past years. In an effort to avoid delay in implementation of LAP in new jurisdictions across the Commonwealth, the statewide LAP Team made the decision to host a virtual train-the-trainer event for new agencies and their domestic violence partner programs in December 2020.

Across four virtual training sessions totaling six hours of instruction, the statewide LAP Team trained approximately 60 members of various law enforcement and domestic violence agencies from different regions of the Commonwealth. This training included instruction on the evidence-based approach to LAP, identifying primary aggressors in instances of domestic violence and intimate partner violence, and the importance of providing victims with direct and immediate access to services. Scenario-based role-playing was also used to provide attendees with experience in administering the LAP questionnaire and determining if potential victims “screen in” as high-danger. Ultimately, this training has allowed multiple jurisdictions to move forward with their plans to successfully roll out LAP in early 2021.

You can find more information about LAP through the [Office of the Attorney General website](#) or by contacting the OAG LAP Coordinator, Morgan Abbate, at MAbbate@oag.state.va.us.

Upcoming DCJS Victims Services Trainings

To learn more about trainings, or to register to attend, please visit www.dcls.virginia.gov/training-events

Succession Planning for Domestic and Sexual Assault Organizations—In Collaboration with Futures Without Violence

February 4, and February 11, 2021 from 2:00–3:15 p.m.

Leadership transitions can be challenging. For non-profit organizations to succeed, it is essential to think critically about the long-term leadership needs of the organization in anticipation of any unexpected changes that may arise, to prepare for planned leadership transitions, and to strategically develop staff internally. Presenters will discuss key elements of a succession plan with specific attention paid to developing a long-term succession-planning lens, identify core values related to equity and social justice in succession planning, and describe a process to plan for leadership transition within a domestic violence/sexual assault organization. Throughout the series, presenters will share tools and resources to assist Virginia-based DVSA organizations to plan for the near and distant future.

As a result of this webinar, participants will be better able to:

- Define and discuss succession planning strategies within DV/SA organizations.
- Identify needs and gaps for succession planning based on your organization's goals for the future.
- Recognize the importance of staff engagement and the use of an equity and social justice lens in the succession planning process.
- Utilize tools and resources to plan and engage in succession planning.

Who should participate?

- Executive Directors, Senior Leadership, and Board Members from Virginia-based DV/SA organizations.
- Participation in teams of 2–3 from the same organization is encouraged, including executive director, one senior leadership staff member, and one board member.

Registration: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAtduCgrzWjHdaHCO1oZ-1M2VWzwqTo1Glp>

Successful Collaborations Between Victim-Serving Agencies and Faith Based Communities

Part 1: February 23, 2021 from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Part 2: March 2, 2021 from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

This two-part training will provide domestic violence advocates and victim services programs with best practices for engaging and collaborating with faith-based organizations. Part one of the training will focus on the benefits of, and strategies for, engaging faith communities in efforts to strengthen and improve the system of care, safety, and support for survivors of domestic violence and their children and hold perpetrators of violence accountable. Part two will review strategies for engagement and provide an opportunity for questions and answers and coaching. The information in this training is intended to help domestic violence programs successfully collaborate with faith-based organizations and develop a shared vision of supporting survivors of domestic violence and their children, promoting healthy relationships, and ending domestic violence in families.

Registration: www.dcls.virginia.gov/training-events/successful-collaborations-between-victims-services-programs-and-faith-communities

Program Administration in Victims Services: Keeping it Real—Maintaining Intent, Clarity and Purpose

March 11, 2021 from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

With shrinking resources and often operating in triage mode, how can program administrators maintain the intent and mission of their program without losing any sense of clarity and purpose for themselves or their staff? This workshop offers strategies for applying leadership values and guidelines for collaboration in order to maintain the program's mission. It reviews practical approaches to problem solving and examines the characteristics of high performing teams, and team leaders. Participants will learn appropriate change management tools, and how to best address resistance to change within victim service programs.

Registration: www.dcls.virginia.gov/training-events/program-administration-victims-services-keeping-it-real-maintaining-intent-clarity

Upcoming DCJS Victims Services Trainings *(Continued)*

Effective Collaboration in Victims Services

March 18, 2021 from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Numerous collaborative efforts and partnerships have effected significant positive changes in the ways victims are viewed, treated, and served in the United States. This training explores the concept of collaboration, along with recommended strategies for successful collaborative efforts to enhance public safety and improve victim services. This presentation will address types of working relationships, challenges to successful working relationships, and potential collaborative stakeholders, including the community as a partner in collaboration.

Registration: www.dcjs.virginia.gov/training-events/effective-collaboration-victims-services-tools-and-techniques-virtual-training

Trauma-Responsive Sexual Assault Investigation Strategies: Corroborating Evidence

March 23, 2021 from 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Save the date – sign up for updates at www.dcjs.virginia.gov/subscribe to be alerted when registration is open

Funding for Victims Services: Resources and Grant Development

March 25, 2021 from 10:00 a.m. –12:00 p.m.

Funding is a critical part in the strategic planning and implementation process for victim services. This presentation will guide participants in looking beyond public funding to private and other non-typical funding sources. The essential nature of multiple funding sources and long-range planning will also be discussed. Participants will be provided insight into strategies for successful resource develop, how and where to find funding sources, as well as the critical steps in short-term and long-term funding considerations.

Registration: www.dcjs.virginia.gov/training-events/funding-victim-services-resources-grant-development

Successfully Investigating and Prosecuting Alcohol-Facilitated Sexual Assault

March 30, 2021 from 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Save the date – sign up for updates at www.dcjs.virginia.gov/subscribe to be alerted when registration is open

Overcoming Bias in the Investigation and Prosecution of Sexual Assault

April 15, 2021 from 2:00–3:30 p.m.

Bias is a significant barrier to successfully investigating and prosecuting sexual assault and other gender-based crimes. This workshop is designed to identify, challenge and overcome bias in the investigation and in the courtroom, and to offer techniques to keep victims safe and hold offenders accountable. Professionals are sometimes reluctant to believe, or unable to recognize, that they have biases or harbor stereotypes that can undermine the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault. In fact, worldviews, lived realities, and cultural messages become self-fulfilling prophecies that inevitably shape how we think. Criminal justice professionals must understand sexual assault dynamics. Using real life case examples, attendees will learn to identify how acceptance of certain practices, societal norms, and boundaries evolve into worldviews, which can undermine the investigation, prosecution, and outcome of a sexual assault case.

Registration: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_djwGnVhGTgK5WLYuKBnSIQ

Using Expert Testimony in Sexual Assault Prosecutions

April 27, 2021 from 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Save the date – sign up for updates at www.dcjs.virginia.gov/subscribe to be alerted when registration is open

Upcoming DCJS Victims Services Trainings *(Continued)*

Lessons from the SADI

April 28, 2021 from 1:00–3:00 p.m.

The Sexual Assault Demonstrative Initiative (SADI) was the first large-scale project to address the challenges dual/multi-service programs face in reaching survivors of sexual violence and was created to enhance outreach and services through an organizational change process. Please join representatives from the SADI technical assistance team—MIWSAC, NAPIESV, NSVRC, and RSP—as they discuss the lessons learned from the SADI. Bring your questions, experiences, and curiosity to this dialogue about building meaningful services for survivors of sexual violence.

Registration: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMrdO2uqzMjH9QldRiy8KIH5FZwOav_m5Pa

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

BASIC VICTIM ASSISTANCE ACADEMY

TRAINING DETAILS + TO REGISTER:
WWW.VANETWORK.ORG/EVENTS



What
a
time
to
be
a
new
advocate...

VIRTUAL / 1:00-3:30 / Mondays + Fridays
starting 2/19 (no Academy week of 3/1)

Newsletter Sources

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- ¹⁰ Ibid
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