Leading a New Response to Sexual Violence

The Victim Rights Law Center's mission is to provide legal representation to victims of rape and sexual assault to help rebuild their lives; and to promote a national movement committed to seeking justice for every rape and sexual assault victim.
Dear Friends,

As an organization dedicated to elevating the voices of sexual assault survivors, it is inspiring to hear survivors continue to share their experiences and reach out for services. The #MeToo movement has increased awareness of sexual violence, and as a community, it has helped move us to action.

The #MeToo movement has also amplified the fight to end sexual violence in a myriad of ways. Organizations and companies have requested more trainings; more policy makers engaged VRLC attorneys for expert guidance; and we experienced communities coming together, often for the first time, to host dialogues on how to prevent and respond to sexual violence. The number of survivors calling the Victim Rights Law Center (VRLC) for help has tripled since November 2018. Over the past two years, VRLC staff and pro bono attorneys provided free legal representation for over 2,000 sexual assault survivors in Massachusetts and Oregon.

The most pressing legal needs survivors face are privacy (protection of survivor’s medical, mental health, and education records; along with online privacy consultation); safety (restraining orders and customized safety planning); education law (K-12 and campus sexual assault); housing (breaking a lease, eviction, and safe housing transfers); immigration (U-visa, VAWA, and asylum); employment (negotiating with employers for accommodations); and financial stability (victim compensation, consumer law, and social security). Justice for sexual assault survivors does not reside in the criminal justice system alone. A free, trauma-informed civil attorney by a survivor’s side can help a survivor stay safely in (or leave) their home, school, job, and sometimes the country.

In 2018 and in early 2019, the VRLC opened three new Massachusetts offices in Belchertown, New Bedford, and Worcester. This model allows expert sexual assault attorneys to be integrated within their local communities and accessible to survivors throughout Massachusetts. Our team consists of 26 attorneys between our Massachusetts and Oregon offices, each of whom has the unique skills necessary to help sexual assault survivors stabilize their lives in the aftermath of an assault. In addition, each of our attorneys has specialty practice areas, including education, housing, immigration, and employment. This diversity in expertise allows our team to provide holistic and comprehensive legal assistance to survivors, whatever their legal needs may be.

VRLC attorneys take what they learn from representing individual survivors and harness it to train tens of thousands of lawyers and advocates through our national training programs. Our attorneys are renown throughout the country for leadership in the intersections of sexual violence and privacy, campus sexual assault, minors, and the law. Developing a well-equipped corps of legal professionals nationwide is critical, which is why we host the only National Sexual Assault Law Conference in the country. Our 2018 conference was held in Charleston, South Carolina, and the 2019 conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The VRLC is committed to helping survivors locally and training attorneys nationwide to respond to the calls of survivors.

We cannot do this alone. We are grateful to every donor and every volunteer who has helped ensure services for survivors.

From all of us at the VRLC, thank you for joining us in giving survivors hope!

In gratitude,

Stacy Malone
K-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

The VRLC’s Education Team provides direct legal representation for higher education and K-12 student-survivors, in addition to national training and expert guidance to Title IX coordinators and student conduct administrators. Our attorneys support administrators in their efforts to strengthen policy and develop protocols that are culturally inclusive, fundamentally fair, and contemplate the dynamics of gender-based violence. Our education work also requires VRLC attorneys to advocate for federal and state policy changes that reflect the needs of our clients.

In early 2018, the VRLC joined other victim advocacy organizations in filing suit against the U.S. Department of Education and Secretary Betsy DeVos for rescinding an Obama-era guidance intended to protect the education rights of sexual assault survivors, among others. As of this publication, that case is still pending in the 9th Circuit.

In January 2019, the VRLC again pushed back on the U.S. Department of Education by submitting a comment in response to the Department’s Proposed Regulations Regarding Title IX. Our concern was that the “new framework will incentivize institutions of higher education to place a greater emphasis on the rights of respondents than protection for complainants, cause fewer victims of rape and sexual assault to come forward, and foreclose victims’ ability to seek redress from the Department.”

The bravery of our youngest clients continues to inspire us to push for change in Massachusetts, Oregon, and beyond to maintain survivors’ access to educational access of survivors.
LEGAL HELP FOR SURVIVORS

Survivors of sexual assault often come to the VRLC seeking help with multiple legal issues. VRLC attorneys provide a wide range of expertise across several areas of law, so our clients can receive trauma-informed legal assistance for several different legal issues all in one place.

(MA) In 2018, the VRLC opened satellite offices in Belchertown, New Bedford, and Worcester, MA to better reach and serve survivors in communities outside the greater Boston area. As a result of outreach done by attorneys based in those offices, we saw a significant increase in intake calls throughout the state in 2018 and 2019, with hundreds of clients being served and over a thousand legal matters being handled by VRLC attorneys in 2019.

(OR) In 2018, the VRLC’s Oregon office enhanced services for victims of sex trafficking and developed new and innovative partnerships. Nearly all survivors served were poor or low-income, with 9% experiencing homelessness; approximately half were immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and 1-in-3 had limited English proficiency; nearly 1-in-5 had a disability; 1-in-5 identified as LGBTQ; and 2-in-3 were people of color. We also welcomed new lawyers to provide services to minors age 10 and under, immigrant survivors non-offending immediate family members, and student and transgender survivors on limited matters throughout Oregon.

PRIVACY TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Our national privacy training and technical assistance (mentorship and support) team helps Office on Violence Against Women grantees across the country protect the privacy of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking survivors. We provide resources and expert guidance to hundreds of lawyers, campus and community-based advocates, sexual assault nurse examiners, and population-specific service providers, and train thousands of victim service providers.

In 2018 we launched the Campus and Minors Privacy Project (CAMPP), allowing us to help victim service providers protect the privacy of minors and survivors on college campuses. In the same year, we were also awarded a “mini-grant” from the National Prison Rape Elimination Act Resource Center to convene focus groups to explore how effectively community-based advocates provide confidential services to sexual assault survivors in custodial settings. The findings and recommendations from this project were finalized in 2019.

In 2019, many of our clients needed help with immigration matters; nearly 1-in-3 needed support and advocacy after reporting to law enforcement and throughout the criminal justice process; and 1-in-6 needed civil protection orders to keep themselves and their families safe. 85% of our clients lived below the federal poverty line; 72% were Black, Indigenous, and other people of color; over half were immigrants (and 32% limited English proficient); 1-in-4 disclosed a disability; and 1-in-6 identified as LGBTQ.

2018
- MA total individual callers: 910
- MA served 547 clients with 1,043 separate legal matters.
- OR intake calls: 496
- OR served 313 clients with 657 distinct legal matters.

2019
- MA total individual callers: 1017
- MA served 616 clients with 1,282 separate legal matters.
- OR intake calls: 354
- OR served 338 survivors on 572 separate legal matters.
SEXUAL ASSAULT JUSTICE EDUCATION

VRLC Sexual Assault Justice Education (SAJE) Training and Technical Assistance (TA) Project created two new resources, the Where to Start: Sexual Assault Legal Services Toolkit and the Where to Start: Creating a Pro Bono Project, both designed for Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) grantees developing sexual assault-focused Legal Assistance for Victims projects. The toolkits include resources, templates, and guidance for grantees. The VRLC’s Boston Office hosted two in-depth, comprehensive, multi-day trainings for a total of 15 attorneys from programs across the country, designed to help them successfully launch and implement their projects. Our team also delivered 22 online and in-person trainings attended by over 1,500 victim service providers, and spent over 700 hours providing 387 consultations, responses to individual information request, and referrals to OVW grantees and others working on behalf of sexual assault survivors.

In 2019, our SAJE project team provided 387 consultations, responses to individual information requests, and referrals to OVW grantees and others working on behalf of sexual assault survivors. They also delivered 20 in-person and online trainings attended by 1,333 victim service providers, including multiple trainings designed to help grantees understand how intersecting systems of oppression impact the legal needs of young, BIPOC, and LGBTQ survivors. During these trainings, presenters and participants worked to identify the systemic barriers these survivor face and to develop strategies for making their organizations’ services more accessible and inclusive. The VRLC’s Portland, Oregon, office hosted a 3-day intensive training for a new 8-person cohort of new lawyers seeking guidance and support to improve legal services for sexual assault survivors at their organizations.

NATIONAL SEXUAL VIOLENCE LAW CONFERENCE

As the first nonprofit law center in the country solely focused on the legal needs of sexual violence, the VRLC is consistently on the forefront of innovative programming. In response to the need of attorneys serving survivors, the VRLC launched the nation’s only National Sexual Violence Law Conference. Developed specifically for legal practitioners across the country who serve rape and sexual assault survivors, each conference includes workshops that cover a broad range of topics, including how to conduct a comprehensive legal intake, how to incorporate sexual assault services into a domestic violence program, combatting vicarious trauma, defamation, and much more.

Our 2018 conference, held in Charleston, South Carolina, consisted of 85 legal professionals and featured Tina Tchen, the CEO of Time’s Up, as our Keynote Speaker and included presentations on defamation, digital evidence, and understanding incapacitation. In 2019, the conference was held in New Orleans, Louisiana and expanded to 115 participants. Legal practitioners from legal aid agencies, coalitions, and private practices participated in facilitated discussions on select topics that affect their clients; practiced self-care with a yoga class for attendees; and attended various workshops, including serving incarcerated survivors, restorative justice, and cultural humility when working with LGBTQQI+ survivors.
Our 2018 annual gala honored Kristen Gibbons Feden, Esq. with our **Leadership Award**. Kristen has been a fearless leader for survivors and represented numerous survivors in their pursuit of civil justice. The New York Times even dubbed her “The Prosecutor Who Stared Down Bill Cosby.” She also played a critical role in the first trial of Commonwealth v. William H. Cosby, which resulted in a hung jury, and the second trial where a conviction was attained.

We also paid tribute to Manatt, Phelps and Phillips, LLP with our **Champion Award** and Jeremy Meisinger, Esq. of Foley Hoag with our **Shining Star Award** for his outstanding pro bono services.

Thank you to our generous supporters with a special thanks to our **Shining Star Sponsors**: Manatt Phelps & Phillips and Goodwin Procter.

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR PRO BONO ATTORNEYS

We are very grateful to the following law firms who provided pro bono assistance in 2018 and 2019 to VRLC in MASSACHUSETTS and OREGON:

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<th>2018 - MA &amp; OR</th>
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<td>Beaverton Law Group, LLP</td>
<td>Conn Kavanaugh Rosenthal Peisch &amp; Ford, LLP</td>
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<td>Cambreleng Law LLC</td>
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<td>Goulston &amp; Storrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harriman Law</td>
<td>Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.</td>
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<td>Knuuttila Law LLC</td>
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<td>Rich May, P.C.</td>
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PRO BONO TRAINING AND PARTNERSHIPS

In 2018 and 2019 pro bono attorneys volunteered over 1,500 hours for VRLC cases, ensuring countless protection orders as well as securing the privacy rights of victims in criminal cases. We have been fortunate to continue our partnerships with several wonderful law firms. In 2018 and 2019 we were excited to welcome McCarter English and the Law Office of Sam Lambroza as VRLC pro bono attorneys and firms.

In 2019, the VRLC developed Pro Bono On Demand (generously funded by the Massachusetts Bar Foundation), which allows VRLC pro bono attorneys to access VRLC training webinars, tip sheets, and other materials online. Thanks to the commitment of our law firm partners, we can help an exponential number of survivors.
VRLC FINANCIALS

FY18 Expenses

Federal and State Funding  $2,203,921
Donated Goods & Services     $450,310
Special Events       $174,186
Foundation Funding       $15,500
Individual Donations       $86,308
Program Fees        $63,530
Interest/Other Income        $11,790
TOTAL REVENUE   $3,005,545

Client Services $2,041,384
National Training & Technical Assistance $800,408
Development $169,044
Management & Administration $109,246
TOTAL EXPENSES $3,120,082

Expenses slightly exceed revenue due to accounting requirements to straight-line office lease payments and deferral of annual event revenue.

FY18 Revenue

Federal and State Funding  $2,203,921
Donated Goods & Services $450,310
Special Events $174,186
Foundation Funding $15,500
Individual Donations $86,308
Program Fees $63,530
Interest/Other Income $11,790
TOTAL REVENUE $3,005,545
FY19 Expenses

Client Services $2,433,517
National Training & Technical Assistance $923,699
Development $214,592
Management & Administration $101,094
TOTAL EXPENSES $3,672,902

Expenses slightly exceed revenue due to accounting requirements to straight-line office lease payments, deferral of annual event revenue, and no in-person event for FY19.