



Victim Rights Law Center

February Newsletter

Dear Friends,

In February, as we recognize Black History and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Months, we also acknowledge that our work at the VRLC is deeply impacted by both.

Celebrating Black History Month we honor the legacy of Black women who have shaped prevention for and response to sexual violence. The advocacy and leadership of these women continues to inspire action on behalf of sexual assault survivors today.

While we elevate Black activists, teen dating violence prevention efforts remind us that there is still work to be done. Throughout our legal representation, we see a persistent trend when students of color, specifically Black girls, report sexual harassment and sexual assault at school – they are blamed and often punished. In 2021, VRLC submitted a comment to the Department of Education highlighting this issue and we continue to call out the racial inequities in the systems survivors navigate every day.

Thank you for standing in solidarity with the VRLC and those we serve.

Stacy Malone
Executive Director

EVENTS



The
Miriam Fund



VRLC Executive Director Stacy Malone recently participated in panel, hosted by the Miriam Fund and the Social Innovation Forum, on the importance of evaluation and measurement in assessing survivor support needs.

Data collection is instrumental in helping the VRLC identify underserved and marginalized populations and develop strategies to deepen relationships with community partners to connect with the survivors who need our services most.

Past funding earmarked for domestic violence, for example, left the majority of rape and sexual assault victims without services, as perpetrators are most often **NOT** intimate partners but classmates, co-workers and acquaintances of victims.

The VRLC continues to report data to funders, supporting a shift in understanding of who rape and sexual assault survivors are and investing in

resources to meet their needs.

UPDATE FROM ANTARCTICA

Frigid temps haven't hampered VRLC work to prevent sexual assault and harassment in the U.S. Antarctic Program.



VRLC National Director of Training and Technical Assistance Jessie Mindlin, whose recent Emperor Penguin sighting only rivals anticipation of seeing her first Arctic sunset after months of daylight, returned to the ice earlier this month after a break to wrap up the summer season working alongside Leading and Dynamic Services Solutions , Alteristic, Inc., and the National Science Foundation.

Learn more about VRLC joint efforts for the U.S. Antarctic Program. Read the full report [here](#) or a summary [here](#).

DIRECT SERVICES

Teen Dating Violence Awareness

The CDC reports that over 71% of women and 55% of men experienced intimate partner violence under the age of 25. VRLC attorneys represent hundreds of young sexual assault survivors every year.

We recently represented a teen who awoke to her boyfriend assaulting her. VRLC responded by securing a restraining order against the ex-boyfriend and helping the young survivor navigate the criminal justice system, through which the perpetrator was convicted.

When the teen survivor was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder following the assault, her VRLC attorney advocated for a "504 Plan" so that she could receive accommodations at school. She and her family are hopeful that with the criminal case closed, a restraining order in place, and supports at school, that she can heal and focus on her education.

Check out this National Sexual Violence Resource Center teen dating violence awareness resource list including discussion guides and support for parents, caregivers and youth [here](#).

VRLC IN THE NEWS

A View from the Field

Senior Attorney Malia Bennett was featured in the [January/February 2023 edition](#) of Sexual Assault Report's "A View from the Field," an interview highlighting expert views on developments in sexual violence prevention and intervention.

"We talk a lot about secondary trauma in this field but I also believe in secondary resiliency," Bennett said in the article. "I work with survivor clients who embody resiliency and I cannot help but be impacted by that. My clients give me the strength and energy to continue in the work."



NATIONAL TRAINING

Tips from the VRLC Training Team

Victims of sexual assault who are K-12 students and have a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder diagnosis may be eligible for special education services.

If a survivor's PTSD is deemed to be impairing their ability to make effective progress in school without specially designed instruction, they may qualify for special education accommodations.

If you are an advocate or an attorney working at a community-based or legal services organization and would like a consultation with a VRLC attorney, click [here](#).

BEHIND THE SCENES

VRLC Staff Outing



Some members of the VRLC Massachusetts team showed off their darts skills at a staff outing held this month.

Deputy Director Stephanie Holt and Development Director Robin Whitney tied for 1st place!

Get Involved

3 Ways to Support VRLC

- Are you an attorney in Massachusetts or Oregon? [Learn more](#) about becoming a Pro Bono Attorney with the VRLC!
- Purchase our official VRLC T-shirts [here](#) to help spread awareness of the important work we do on behalf of survivors at the VRLC. 100% of proceeds go to supporting survivors.

- Donate [here](#). Your continued generosity helps fund our work on behalf of survivors



Since 2003, the Victim Rights Law Center has worked to provide survivors with free legal services to help restore their lives and promote a national movement seeking justice for rape and sexual assault survivors. Learn more about our efforts [here](#).

Massachusetts Office
11 Beacon Street, Suite 520
Boston, MA 02108
Phone: (617) 399-6720
Fax: (617) 399-6722

Oregon Office
610 SW Broadway, Suite 308
Portland, OR 97205.
Phone: (503) 274-5477
Fax: (503) 715-2183

