



Victim Rights Law Center

March Newsletter

Dear Friends,

This month we celebrate Women's History and Disability Awareness Month. We honor the fierce activists who dedicate their lives to advancing the rights of women and individuals with disabilities.

As we recognize women's history, we also face the current struggle for reproductive freedom. *Roe v. Wade* has ended and is now a disturbing chapter in women's history. The attack on reproductive rights continues as abortion opponents have pivoted their focus to reducing access to abortion pills. Abortion care is essential for rape victims. We must re-write this chapter in women's history.

Our community also mourns the recent loss of Judy Heumann, an internationally recognized leader in the disability civil rights movement. Ms. Heumann's activism as a disability change-maker spanned decades, resulting in laws and policies that the VRLC relies on today in representing survivors with disabilities. We will honor Ms. Heumann's legacy by continuing to advance the inclusion of disabled people.

Stacy Malone
Executive Director

VRLC IN THE NEWS

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Privacy is so critical, and if we don't allow them to do these cases anonymously, then we are going to decrease the chances of holding perpetrators and institutions accountable.

- VRLC Executive Director Stacy Malone on the use of pseudonyms in civil cases related to sexual assault

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Check out CNN for VRLC's analysis on a nominee for the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and resulting victim privacy concerns [here](#).

The VRLC was also recently cited in *The Telegraph* for our role in the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women's Campus Grant Program. Read the article [here](#).

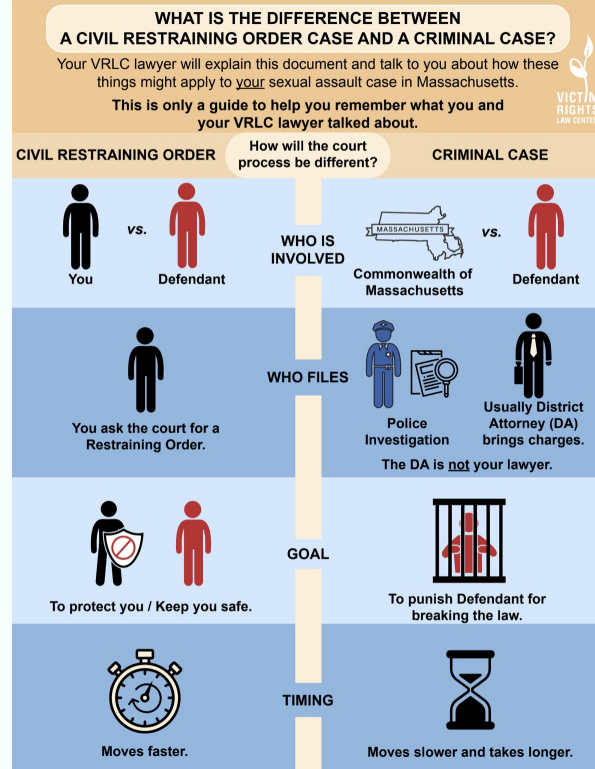
DIRECT SERVICES

Client Story: Improving Access

VRLC represented a survivor with intellectual and developmental disabilities who had been sexually

assaulted by a supervisor at work. The survivor filed a police report and reported the assault to her store manager, but did not understand how the criminal case was proceeding. She was uncomfortable at work as her workplace continued to schedule her shifts alongside the perpetrator.

Using our newly developed infographics, a VRLC attorney explained the criminal justice process. Her VRLC attorney also reviewed available employment remedies and their potential impacts on the criminal case. VRLC also secured her a one-year civil protection order to ensure her safety at work and facilitate improved communication with the District Attorney's office to better understand the status of the investigation and her rights in the criminal case.



Collaboration Benefits Clients of All Abilities



For the past four years, VRLC attorneys have collaborated with Pathways for Change and Mass Advocates Standing Strong to improve and increase access to VRLC services for survivors with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Pathways is a Worcester, Massachusetts-based rape crisis center, and Mass Advocates Standing Strong is a statewide grassroots organization led by and for self-advocates – individuals with disabilities advocating for disability rights. Through our partnership, the VRLC conducted a comprehensive audit of services and spaces. As a

result, we improved our overall client experience by creating many new client-facing documents that incorporate infographics and plain language to promote improved understanding of our complex legal systems. We are currently drafting additional resources aimed specifically at attorneys to support them in using these resources so that our pro bono partners may also improve their accessibility.

NATIONAL TRAINING

VRLC Training Tips

Disability & Trauma-Informed Representation

- Do not assume clients with the same disability will present the same.
- Ask about accommodations at the outset of communication.
- Be prepared to meet accommodation requests in a myriad of ways.

- If you are a lawyer or advocate working for a community-based or legal services organization and would like assistance with ensuring full-range accessibility to survivors with disabilities, contact a VRLC attorney [here](#).

BEHIND THE SCENES



Lights, Camera, Action!

Elizabeth Cayouette at Dechert filming pro bono attorneys for VRLC's 20th anniversary video.

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](#).

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