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,

All of us at the Victim Rights Law Center hope you, your families, and your colleagues are happy and doing well! The world continues to be a rollercoaster, but our mission to help rape and sexual assault survivors holds steadfast. From pandemic isolation to determining how to reintegrate safely, our attorneys and paralegals continue to serve survivors virtually and in-person to be responsive to survivors' legal needs.

I often say the VRLC's “secret sauce” is our synergy of providing holistic legal representation to individual survivors in addition to training and mentoring other professionals to improve the national response to sexual violence. The VRLC is focused on making a powerful impact both locally and nationally. This annual report showcases our unwavering and compassionate efforts to help survivors during an especially challenging time when they have needed us the most.

**Direct Services in Massachusetts and Oregon**

The VRLC's anchor has always been that we are the first nonprofit law center in the country solely focused on the legal needs of sexual assault survivors. Through our representation of individual rape and sexual assault survivors, we help them stay in (or leave) their jobs, homes, schools, and sometimes even the country. Our attorneys are experts in sexual violence as well as multiple areas of civil law. Together, they creatively weave a safety net to help survivors rebuild their lives following violence.

**National Training and Mentorship**

The VRLC leverages what we learn from representing individual survivors to develop innovative content to train and mentor other lawyers, advocates, medical professionals, campus administrators, and other professionals to help survivors in their own communities. It is critical that we share our skills and strategies and collaborate with a multi-disciplinary approach to improve the response to sexual violence nationwide.

**Join Us**

Fundraising through the bumpy road of the pandemic with funding cuts to legal services for victims of crime is nerve-wracking and fosters instability. As always, we have confidence that our community will lift us up as we stand by survivors. Thank you for attending our virtual events and for continuing to invest in the work of the VRLC! Please follow the VRLC on social media (@VictimRightsLaw), sign up for our newsletter, host an event, and donate. Let's ensure the VRLC stays strong for survivors as we continue to weather this storm together.

In gratitude,

Stacy Malone, Esq.
Executive Director
Board of Directors

Rebecca Chasen, Co-Chair
Krista Green Pratt, Co-Chair
Spectra A. I. Asala
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Andrea Robinson
Brenda Sharton
Maegan Wilkinson

LEGAL HELP FOR RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS

Sexual assault survivors often come to the VRLC needing help with multiple complex legal issues. VRLC attorneys provide a wide range of expertise across several areas of law, which promotes trauma-informed legal assistance for survivors all in one place— the VRLC.

Massachusetts: the VRLC’s staff attorneys in Massachusetts focused on improving accessibility of services for survivors as the pandemic continued. Attorneys remained responsive to survivors’ needs, primarily meeting clients virtually, but also offering in-person meetings to those for whom remote meetings were not accessible. This sustained shift to largely remote meetings informed an update to our library of client forms. These forms were translated into plain language, edited to include pictorial representation of the concepts contained in the documents, and made screen-reader accessible. As a result, the documents are more accessible for everyone, but particularly for survivors with intellectual and developmental disabilities, minor survivors, survivors experiencing the neurobiological impact of trauma, survivors with visual impairments, and survivors accessing services remotely.

Oregon: the VRLC’s staff attorneys in Oregon continued to promote and provide much-needed legal services throughout the pandemic, leading to a 12% increase in the total numbers of survivors served. Priority legal needs for survivors continued to be immigration matters; support and advocacy after reporting to law enforcement and throughout the criminal justice system; civil protection orders to promote safety; and help securing benefits and other forms of economic support. The Oregon direct services team continues to increase access to legal services for many of the region’s most marginalized and vulnerable survivors.
Massachusetts

962 individuals called the MA intake line

578 rape, sexual assault and stalking survivors were assisted with 1,074 separate legal matters

39% of clients identified as Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color

9% identified as immigrants

5% had limited English proficiency

4% were experiencing homelessness

23% disclosed a disability

12% identified as LGBTQ

Oregon

455 individuals called the OR intake line

444 rape, sexual assault and stalking survivors were assisted with 720 separate legal matters

79% of clients identified as Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color

59% identified as immigrants

41% had limited English proficiency

9% were experiencing homelessness

19% disclosed a disability

15% identified as LGBTQ
PRIVACY TRAINING AND RESOURCES

The VRLC’s national Privacy Rights Project provided technical assistance (mentorship and consultations) and training for attorneys (and their project partners) funded by the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) to provide confidential legal assistance to survivors of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking. National training this year included a webinar co-facilitated by the National Immigration Women’s Advocacy Project exploring best practices and emerging issues when representing immigrant survivors of sexual violence, “Video Court and Trauma-Informed Legal Practice,” at the OVW new grantee orientations for grantees addressing and preventing crime in rural areas and Legal Assistance to Victims programs, and “Protecting Survivor Privacy in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.” We completed various resources for the anti-sexual violence field, including a plain-language release of information form for survivors, a model data breach policy, and translations of three of our Minors’ Privacy Toolkit components into Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Russian, Korean, Haitian Creole, Tagalog, French, and Brazilian Portuguese. The Sexual Assault Report, a national publication of the Civic Research Institute, reprinted our Confidentiality and Contact Tracing FAQs in their March/April 2021 issue. Our team also began work with the Sexual Violence Justice Institute on protecting survivor confidentiality with Sexual Assault Response Teams.
SEXUAL ASSAULT JUSTICE EDUCATION

The Sexual Assault Justice Education Project’s training and technical assistance team provided 526 consultations, responses to individual information requests, and referrals to Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) grantees and others working on behalf of sexual assault survivors. We also delivered 32 virtual trainings attended by nearly 3,000 victim service providers. The year’s offerings included, among others, a series of webinars exploring the assault-related legal needs of LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC youth and of youth with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities; population-specific webinars examining culturally-responsive legal services for American Indian and Alaska Native survivors (co-presented with Hallie Bongar-White of the Southwest Center for Law and Policy) and of immigrant survivors (with Leslye Orloff, Director of the National Immigrant Women’s Advocacy Project); a virtual panel on the use of restorative justice with survivors of sexual violence, and a multipart virtual training programs with lawyers new to serving sexual assault survivors and with supervising attorneys at OVW-funded legal services programs. The Sexual Assault Justice Education project was re-funded by the Office on Violence Against Women, and, as a result, will be updating VRLC’s groundbreaking Beyond the Criminal Justice System, a comprehensive manual on the provision of civil legal services to rape and sexual assault survivors.

K-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION

For many K-12 students, the fall of 2020 brought a return to in-person learning. For some, the return to school meant navigating daily interactions with the person who harmed them. VRLC attorneys advocated for robust and enforceable safety plans so clients could feel safe at school. We helped clients obtain the special education services they needed, including those they missed out on during remote learning, and advised them through the often-confusing Title IX grievance process. In
recognition that districts were struggling to implement the new Title IX Regulations, we created Where to Start: First Steps Toward Implementation of the Title IX Rule for K-12 Districts. This guide was generously supported by The Phyllis W. McGillicuddy Charitable Trust and was shared widely in Massachusetts, Oregon, and beyond.

In our higher education cases, we navigated the new reality that many university disciplinary hearings now include live, direct cross-examination. Virtual hearings required our attorneys to find new ways to ensure that clients were supported throughout a process that is more adversarial than ever. We developed expertise to make these virtual hearings trauma-informed and advocated to maintain our clients’ privacy throughout.

In June 2020, the VRLC along with three organizational co-plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against then-Secretary of Education Betsy Devos and the Department of Education, challenging the new Title IX regulations. The regulations added to the existing barriers survivors face every day. On July 28, 2021, a Massachusetts federal judge issued a decision in VRLC et al. v. Cardona following a November 2020 trial. Judge Young’s decision vacated one of the most harmful and inequitable sections of the regulations, commonly referred to as the “exclusionary rule.” The “exclusionary rule” prohibited from consideration any statements made by parties or witnesses if the individual who made the statement did not submit to cross-examination at a live hearing. The provision yielded deleterious and unreliable results. On August 24, 2021, in response to the decision, the Department of Education issued a letter confirming the Office for Civil Rights would no longer enforce the “exclusionary rule” provision. Despite the decision being narrower than we hoped, it was impactful. We have witnessed the impact firsthand when VRLC’s own clients are given the opportunity to make a choice about whether to participate in cross-examination. We are deeply grateful to the team of attorneys who represented the VRLC, including National Women’s Law Center, Morrison & Foerster LLP, and Diane Rosenfeld.

Where to Start: First Steps Toward Implementation of the Title IX Rule for K-12 Districts.
PRO BONO PARTNERSHIPS

The VRLC relies on the assistance of pro bono attorneys and legal paraprofessionals to help provide free civil legal assistance to survivors in Massachusetts and Oregon. This year pro bono attorneys handled a variety of complex appeals for clients in the areas of privacy and safety, working to strengthen protections for survivors. One highlight from this year was that pro bono attorneys in Massachusetts logged over 1,000 hours helping to serve survivors, resulting in over 30 VRLC clients receiving assistance that they would not have been able to receive otherwise without the help of our pro bono partners.

THANK YOU TO OUR PRO BONO ATTORNEYS

Bennett Hartman
Cappelli Law
Conn Kavanaugh Rosenthal Peisch & Ford LLP
Crispin Marton Cambreleng
Tiffany Davidson
Dechert LLP
Dumas & Vaughn, LLC
Foley Hoag LLP
Goodwin LLP
Goulston & Storrs
Harriman Law
Knuuttila Law
Law Office of Sam Lambroza
Levy & Blackman LLP
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLP
McCarter & English, LLP
McDermott Will & Emery
Miller, Nash, Graham & Dunn
Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky & Popeo, P.C
Morgan Lewis
Perkins Coie LLP
Proskauer LLP
Seyfarth Shaw LLP
Sinclair Law LLC
Stoel Rives LLP
WilmerHale
Wolf Greenfield
BE THE LIGHT CAMPAIGN

Summer-Fall 2020

During the VRLC’s FY21 year, we were unable to safely hold our annual Shining Star Gala in-person. In its place, we launched a digital fundraising campaign on July 6, 2020 to raise critical unrestricted funds that the gala brings in each year. Our “Be The Light” campaign aimed to raise awareness on how COVID-19 affected survivors through a series of videos and infographics that we shared via email, social media, and on our website. Topics included:

- Survivors Trapped at Home
- Increased Survivor Needs
- Spikes in Child Sexual Abuse
- Racial Disparities Among Survivors
- Abuse Targeted at Immigrants
- New Title IX Regulations

The campaign commenced in the fall of 2020, raising over $213,000 in support of sexual assault survivors.

Thank you to our generous supporters with a special thanks to our Illumination Contributors, Marybeth Burke and Sam Lambroza, Michele and Howard Kessler, Georgia Murray and Mark Maloney, Brenda and Rick Sharton, and Al Tringali and Stacy Malone.

Thank you to our Radiance Contributors, Biogen Inc., Casner & Edwards, Feldman Geospatial, Foley Hoag LLP, Harriman Law, Robert Insolia, Kristin Knuuttila, Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP, Deb and Steve Marcus, Morgan Lewis, Andrea Robinson and Jonathan Talamo, Seyfarth Shaw Charitable Foundation, and Christopher and Margaret Price.

VRLC Financials: FY21

**Expense**

Total $4,122,332

- Client Services $2,753,844
- National Training and Technical Assistance $601,868
- Management and Administration $592,688
- Fundraising $173,932

**Revenue**

Total $4,172,095

- Individual Donations $188,003
- Program Fees $54,735
- Special Events $21,534
- Interest/Other Income $30,979
- Donated Goods and Services $800,822
- Federal and State Funding $2,927,239
- Foundation Funding $148,783
$10,000 and above
Anonymous
Marybeth Burke and Sam Lambroza
Casner & Edwards, LLP
Michele and Howard Kessler
Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP
Georgia Murray and Mark Maloney
Christopher and Margaret Price
Brenda and Rick Sharton
The Miriam Fund
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Susan Estrich
Feldman Geospatial
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Harriman Law
McCarter & English, LLP
Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.
Kathryn I. Murtagh
Karen O'Malley and Michael Feldman
Oregon Jewish Community Youth Foundation
Joan Sapir and Joel Ristuccia
Sharon and Alan Weston
WilmerHale
Maegan and PJ Wilkinson

$5,000 – $9,999
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Kristin Knuuttila
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP
Deb and Steve Marcus

McDermott Will & Emery
Krista Green Pratt and Josh Pratt
Andrea Robinson and Jonathan Talamo
Seyfarth Shaw LLP
Cindy Vreeland and David Jones
$1,000 – $1,999

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