



Victim Rights Law Center

March Newsletter

Dear Friends,

This month we recognize Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. We celebrate and lift up individuals living with disabilities, and allies, who work tirelessly to remove barriers and think outside the box about what it means to be truly accessible.

Individuals living with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by sexual violence. And while the statistics are staggering, we see firsthand the incredible resilience of all survivors, and especially those who face additional barriers to achieving justice.

In partnership with [Pathways for Change](#) and [Mass Advocates Standing Strong](#), VRLC has had the opportunity to explore what true accessibility means, and how to achieve that for our clients. As part of this process, we've created plain language resources, increased language access through translation of these resources, and developed infographics and visual supports to explain the complex legal process. See examples below.

I am proud to be part of a team dedicated to making legal services for survivors of sexual assault and rape accessible to **everyone**.

Warmly,
Nora Grais-Clements
Senior Attorney

CONTINUANCES: When a court date gets delayed.

Tell the Victim Witness Advocate your address and phone number so they can let you know about any changes.

You can call the court the day before to check for any changes.

SUMMONS (SUMMARY): A court summons is sent to you. It tells you to go to court at a certain time.

You must go to court when the summons says to go. You can call the court to get more information.

SUPERIOR COURT TRIAL: A judge or 12 person jury hears the evidence and decides if Defendant is guilty or not guilty.

Defendant will be there. OR Defendant does not come to court. Defendant is not guilty.

AFTER THE TRIAL OR PLEA DEAL

Not Guilty Finding

Guilty Plea Deal

SENTENCING May include:

- Defendant is free to go.
- Probation with conditions
- Sex Offender Registry
- Fine
- Restitution
- Prison

Defendant cannot be tried again for the same crime.

This is what you can speak to your lawyer about. Victim Contact Statement

The court process can be complicated. If you have any questions about your case, contact your lawyer.

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Esto es solo una guía para ayudarte a recordar lo que hablan tú y tu abogado.

ENTIENDA EL PROCESO DE LA CORTE SUPERIOR

Tu abogado de VRLC te explicará este documento y hablará contigo sobre las formas que todas estas cosas pueden ayudar a tu caso de violencia sexual en Massachusetts.

COMO EMPIEZA UN CASO ANTE LA CORTE SUPERIOR

Asistente del Fiscal de Distrito (ADA) solicita para iniciar el caso ante el Gran Jurado.

Si el caso comenzó en la Corte Superior, el Jurado debe pasar al Gran Jurado.

GRAN JURADO: 23 personas escuchan la evidencia. A lo menos 12 personas deben estar de acuerdo de que sucedió un delito.

El Gran Jurado se reúne en un lugar privado. El Acusado no está presente.

Un juez escucha el testimonio y evidencia de la víctima y decide si el caso debe ir al Gran Jurado.

El Acusado es presente.

También puede ser que el Juez decida que el caso va a ser juzgado en un juicio por jurado.

El ADA puede hacer preguntas.

Abogado Defensor también puede hacer preguntas.

RIESGOS ACUSADO: El caso será escuchado en la Corte Superior.

LECTURA DE LOS CARGOS: El Acusado es imputado con un delito, usualmente presentará una súplica. Al acusado se le explican sus derechos y los procedimientos a seguir.

No culpable / Culpable

Súplica / Derechos del acusado / Fianzas / Condiciones de libertad / Próxima Cita

AUDIENCIAS PREPARATORIAS: Audiencias judiciales para resolver cualquier asunto relacionado con la evidencia y determinar si el caso pasará a juicio.

Pueden incluir:

- Acuerdo de culpabilidad
- Mociones
- La Próxima Cita
- Evidencia

Si alguien te pide algún record médico, record de salud mental, o escolar, informa tu abogado cuanto antes. Esto puede ser una Moción Dwyer de la Regla 17.

IN THE NEWS

VRLC MEETS CNN



VRLC Executive Director Stacy Malone (left) and Board Member Marybeth Burke (right) enjoyed meeting with CNN Anchor and Chief Political Correspondent, Dana Bash, this week in Washington, DC. It was a great opportunity to promote VRLC's work and discuss sexual violence and the role of media. Thank you, Dana, for taking the time to meet with us!

DIRECT SERVICES

Breakfast with the Women's Bar Association



VRLC Deputy Director Stephanie Holt, pictured (second from right) with other members of the Protected at Work Coalition, attended the Massachusetts Women's Bar Association's annual legislative breakfast held earlier this month at the Massachusetts State House.

NATIONAL TRAINING & CONSULTATION

Supporting Student Survivors



Youth in Education Settings, a new VRLC initiative, provides training and technical assistance to attorneys and advocates to help ensure that student survivors of sexual violence can access all supports available to them. Youth in Education Settings focuses on supporting survivors ages 11-22 on legal issues that arise in K-12 education settings.

For more information, contact us at TA@victimrights.org.

New Legal Advocate Guide

Introducing the VRLC Legal Advocate

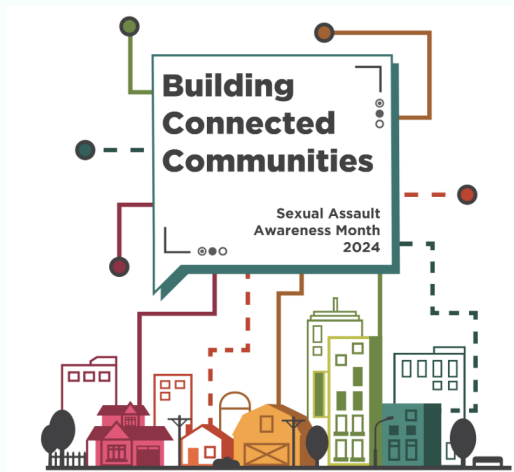
Guide! Available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#), the guide serves as an introduction to sexual assault legal advocacy. It covers a wide range of practical and substantive topics, including preparing a survivor for court and understanding the procedural differences in the criminal and civil legal systems. The Guide includes a series of adaptable templates that can be used with clients to explain complicated subjects. Created with extensive input from advocates across the country, and incorporating Tips from the Bench, the Legal Advocate Guide is an invaluable resource for the field.



LEGAL ADVOCATE GUIDE

EVENTS

Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2024



Next Month is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). This year's theme is "Building Connected Communities." In an effort to build strong, connected communities, VRLC will be offering a variety of events to raise sexual violence awareness, educate and connect with community. Stay tuned for dates and details in our special SAAM April Insider Update!

MISC/FUN NEWS

Staff Outing

Our Massachusetts team recently enjoyed a staff outing at Flight Club in Boston.

This hard-working crew gathered on Leap Day for darts, lunch, homemade cookies - and lots of fun and bonding!



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.](#)

DONATE

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