

# Victim Services Advisory Board

*Advocating for Victims of Crime*



Montgomery County, Maryland  
Fiscal Year 2018 – 2019  
Annual Report

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## Message from the Chairs

Dear County Executive Elrich and County Council:

The Victim Services Advisory Board (VSAB) is pleased to present its FY 2018-2019 annual report. This year's initiatives and priorities continue to meet the Board's mission to provide best practices, advise on policy to administration officials, and advise on legislation that is in the best interest of victims.

The VSAB will continue to dedicate its time to identifying the needs of crime victims and ensuring that these needs are being met, considering our County's current financial constraints. In addition, the VSAB will continue to recognize the importance of community and providing quality services to crime victims, centering its focus on the idea that our County government has a responsibility to provide sufficient funding to serve crime victims.

Moving forward, the VSAB will continue to provide both the County Executive and the County Council with recommendations on how to best meet the needs of crime victims and their families in Montgomery County. We make it our mission to serve this community. On behalf of the members of the VSAB, we respectfully share our report with your office.

Sincerely,

April Marrone and Robin Stimson

Co-Chairs, Victim Services Advisory Board

## Mission Statement

The Victim Services Advisory Board (VSAB) supports Montgomery County's commitment to serving victims of crime and their families. These crimes include: rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide, adults molested as children, terrorism, hate violence, human trafficking, robbery, driving while intoxicated (DWI), vehicular manslaughter, assault, battery, burglary, arson, larceny, stalking, carjacking, harassment, vandalism and bullying.

## Mandate

The Board must periodically:

- review available services and facilities for victims and their families;
- determine the needs of victims and families, which includes services and programs;
- submit at least one report annually to the County Executive and County Council on the progress of programs to victims and their families, and actions needed to improve those programs; and
- make recommendations for appropriate allocation of funds in accordance with priorities and the consideration of financial resources.

## Meetings and Membership

### Meetings

The Board meets the fourth Thursday of each month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the office of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, 1301 Piccard Drive, Rockville MD, 20850. The Board does not meet in August and combines its November and December sessions into one meeting held the first Thursday in December. All meetings are open to the public.

### Members



**Liz Briganty-Vidal, LMSW**

Board member since October 2018

*"I work in the community as a mental health therapist and realized that many of my clients are also in need of support of victims services and being a part of this board allows me to also advocate for them."*



**Ronald Cohen** - award-winning author and journalist, Montgomery County resident for 48 years

Board member since January 2017, after 10 years as an outreach volunteer for victims of rape and domestic violence for Victim Assistance And Sexual Assault Program (VASAP).

*"I sought the position so I could continue helping trauma victims recover and resume safe, normal lives."*



**Cinder Cooper-Barnes**

Board member since January 2017

*"I became a member of the board after serving as an outreach volunteer with the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program because I saw it as a natural extension of serving victims in the county."*



**Kecia R. Lopes, MPA, MSW**

Board member since November 2018

*"My purpose for becoming a VSAB board member was based on both professional and personal experiences. I am impassioned about giving back to help others and believe that my experiences are a great asset for implementing the goals and objectives of [the] VSAB accomplishing its mission."*



**April Marrone, PhD, MBA**

Board member since January 2017 (co-chair since June 2018)

*"I joined the VSAB to help my community be even stronger."*



**Kathryn Pontzer, JD, LL.M.**

Board member since January 2018

*"As a member of the VSAB, I want to use my experience in government relations to continue to build on the community supports needed for victims of crimes."*



**Sally Reid, MSCJ**

Board member since October 2015

*"I have been personally affected by violent and interpersonal crime. I am honored to use my skills and knowledge to assist in producing solutions for Montgomery County crime victims."*



**Leah Schwartz, MSW, LMSW**

Board member since October 2018

*"I joined the Victim Services Advisory Board to advocate for the victims of crime in our community, and to increase awareness and education within the community about what resources are already available. I want to be a voice for additional victim services and to help empower individuals to be the voice for themselves."*



**Reem Sharaf, MSW candidate**

Board member since November 2017

*"I joined the board so I may advocate for and support victims of crime in Montgomery County as they gain autonomy and build resilience after trauma."*





**Robin Stimson, MSW**

Board member since August 2016 (co-chair since June 2018)

*"I have always felt a passionate connection to victims and individuals affected by trauma. I believe we all have the power and opportunity to give a voice to the voiceless."*

Pooja Deb\*\*

Richard Mackenzie\*\*

Anita Pinto\*\*

Sorell Schwartz\*

Jennifer Todd\*\*

Alanna Ward\*\*

Steven Whitehorn\*\*

\*profile information not available for this member

\*\*members resigned during this reporting period

## Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members

Ellen Alexander (Montgomery County Police)

Michael Subin (Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee)

VACANT (Office of Public Defender)

VACANT (Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation)

Rebecca Marcolini (State's Attorney's Office)

Teresa Bennett (HHS)

Rafiah H. Prince (HHS/VASAP)

Nadja Cabello (Trauma Services: APP and VASAP)

Maria Carzon (HHS/VASAP)

# Victim Advocate Program Highlights

## Priorities

The Board had several priorities throughout this reporting period:

- Transitional and permanent housing for victims of domestic violence transitioning from the Betty Ann Krahne (BAK) Domestic Violence shelter
- Budget funding increase for domestic violence offender groups
- County policy change on forensic exams for rape and sexual assault victims
- Advocate for the filling of vacant positions needed by victim services programs
- Victim services directory
- Ongoing support of non-governmental agencies and non-profits that advocate for victims

## Activity Highlights

The Board has been busy advocating throughout this reporting period. Activities to share the Board's priorities included:

- Sending letters to County Executive Marc Elrich and Council President Nancy Navarro
- Meeting with Council Vice President and Chair of the Public Safety Committee, Sidney Katz
- Meeting with Councilmember and Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, Gabe Albornoz
- Meeting with Council Senior Legislative Analyst, Linda McMillan
- Meeting with Special Assistant to the County Executive, Charles Short
- Testifying before the County Council for the Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget
- Testifying before the Interagency Coalition on Homelessness public hearing on funding priorities

Other advocacy activities included testifying on behalf of VASAP in front of the Boards, Committees and Commissions (BCCs) quarterly meetings with the HHS director. The Board also prepared transition documentation for the new HHS director. The VSAB made a value proposition statement to the County Council Health and Human Services Committee on behalf of all HHS BCCs at the October 22, 2018, roundtable discussion. The Board also presented its top priorities to the Committee.

Board members also attended meetings with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission (CJCC).



Looking ahead to next year, the Board plans to build on previous successes by advocating on behalf of victims of sexual assault, human trafficking, domestic violence and gun safety.

The VSAB welcomed the following guest speakers at monthly meetings and participated in the following educational activities:

- The VSAB was provided a tour of the Safe Passage Center in July 2018
- The VSAB was provided a tour of the facilities at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital for Sexual Assault Nurse Exams (SAFE) in January 2019
- The VSAB welcomed Christopher Quasebarth and Russell Butler from the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center in June 2019

### **Victim Services Directory**

The Board spent considerable effort developing a Victim Services Directory that is a comprehensive guide to County services for victims, including healthcare, mental health, education, substance abuse, and more. Creating the directory was a collaborative effort between the VSAB and various programs. Services are categorized according to type and include vital details such as location, contact information, services provided, populations served, languages spoken, and eligibility requirements. The Board has completed the final draft of the directory and the final product will be available in electronic format via the VASAP website soon.

### **VSAB Outreach**

The VSAB's Public Affairs, Education and Outreach subcommittee is charged with sharing the work of the Board with the Montgomery County community. Our mission is to keep the public abreast of items of interest regarding advocacy efforts, legislation, and crime prevention. The subcommittee uses social media to spread awareness of its activities and the services available in the county and state. Members also attend community events to promote the work of VASAP and to educate the public about available services. To learn more about us, please find us on Facebook at:

[www.facebook.com/Victim-Services-Advisory-Board-of-Montgomery-County-MD-240170336583329/](https://www.facebook.com/Victim-Services-Advisory-Board-of-Montgomery-County-MD-240170336583329/)

# Priority: transitional housing for victims of domestic violence

## Goals

The VSAB has the following goals regarding this priority:

1. Establish a priority to ensure safe, transitional housing to end homelessness for domestic violence victims so that they can become self-sufficient survivors
2. Identify transitional housing units for 20 survivor families
3. Allocate \$100,000 for in-depth and targeted case management

## Background

The Betty Ann Krahne shelter, also known as BAK, is Montgomery County's domestic violence shelter. BAK is intended for emergency and short-term stays for domestic violence, trafficking, and rape victims. It is a lifeline for survivors when they are fleeing violence. The shelter was established to provide immediate safety, case management to assist trauma survivors with safety planning, and other concrete services. Research shows that survivors who access shelter services and follow through with the program's recommendations are less likely to be re-assaulted or killed. The maximum stay at BAK is 60 days, however some clients require extensions to accomplish their initial goals or a safe discharge.

Survivors who discharge from the program often move in with family and friends. Some access homeless services and some rent their own housing. The County has a lack of affordable housing options for this population. Transitional housing, which is the most appropriate option for survivors who need additional time to resolve their homelessness, is not adequately offered. In addition, the County lacks the necessary intensive case management services for survivors who need continuous support to work on long-term safety planning and move toward a future free from violence.

BAK was designed as an emergency shelter targeting high-risk victims who are at imminent risk of harm and escaping domestic violence related high-risk lethality. Its size has increased to 60 beds to accommodate the ever-growing County population of domestic violence victims. Providing continuous openings to those victims is necessary to prevent the potential for homicide or serious re-assault. When victims are not able to find appropriate housing accommodations and remain at BAK for an extended period, they prevent higher-risk or immediate-danger victims from gaining access to safe shelter.

Women who are victimized by intimate partners are often prevented from working, lack adequate education, and tend to be isolated from family resources. Many are not equipped to make a transition out of BAK in such a short time. These most vulnerable victims are also often pregnant. The Center for Disease Control (2017) reports that every year in the United States, 300,000 pregnant women experience violence involving an intimate partner. The threat of physical and psychological harm is amplified for expectant mothers. Physically, expectant mothers are less able to escape harm by fighting back, running away, hiding, calling for help, or driving a vehicle to safety. Physical abuse during pregnancy can lead to pregnancy complications and possible death of both mother and unborn child/fetus. Many of BAK's victims are younger than 25 years of age and may have several young children. Many have language and immigration barriers.

When BAK is full, victims seeking shelter are placed in motels. To create space for high-risk individuals at BAK, lower-risk victims who could benefit from transitional housing are placed into motels for 30 days, so they can continue seeking remedies to their homelessness. Motels, however, do not provide childcare or meals, making it almost impossible for victims to continue pursuing their goals for independence. Motels also do not provide ongoing case management and safety planning, which increases victims' risk for danger and re-assault.

- In FY19, out of 200 adult victims, 24 percent discharged from BAK without a permanent solution for their domestic violence homelessness.
- In FY18, out of 231 adult victims, 28 were discharged to motels and 47 ended up with family and friends, often sleeping on a couch or "couch surfing," moving from friend to friend. This means that 32 percent of victims discharged from BAK left without a permanent solution to their domestic violence homelessness. Such dispositions increase the risk for further victimization, Child Protective Service (CPS) involvement, and lead to further destabilization of the survivor.
- In FY17, out of 204 adult victims, 33 percent discharged from BAK without a permanent solution to their domestic violence homelessness.

Domestic violence (DV) victims cannot be protected from their abusers while staying in motels or when they move from one family member to the next. When DV victims are unable to receive needed services and supports, they sometimes return to their abusers to prevent further homelessness. Included is the BAK discharge summary for FY17-FY19 (**Tables 1-3**).

**Table 3: BAK Disposition Summary July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Disposition</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	MoCo Emergency Svcs (Motel/short term)	21	11%
2	Family/Friend	52	28%
3	Return to Abuser	5	3%
5	Home with Protective Order	13	7%
6	Transitional	4	2%
7	New Home	29	16%
8	Treatment/Shelter	14	7%
9	Unknown	19	10%
10	Other	0	0%
11	Unfavorable Discharge	19	10%
12	Inappropriate Referral	2	1%
13	Didn't stay at shelter, bed held	9	5%
<b>Total clients w/disposition codes</b>		<b>187</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 1: BAK Disposition Summary July 1, 2017 – June 20, 2018**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Disposition</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	MoCo Emergency Svcs (Motel/short term)	28	13%
2	Family/Friend	47	22%
3	Return to Abuser	6	3%
5	Home with Protective Order	21	10%
6	Transitional	9	4%
7	New Home	32	15%
8	Treatment/Shelter	10	5%
9	Unknown	38	18%
10	Other	0	0%
11	Unfavorable Discharge	7	3%
12	Inappropriate Referral	8	4%
13	Didn't stay at shelter, bed held	11	5%
<b>Total clients w/disposition codes</b>		<b>217</b>	<b>95%*</b>

\*Of 231 total clients, there is a disposition code for 217

**Table 2: BAK Disposition Summary July 1, 2016 – June 20, 2017**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Disposition</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	MoCo Emergency Svcs (Motel/short term)	17	8%
2	Family/Friend	51	25%
3	Return to Abuser	11	5%
5	Home with Protective Order	8	3%
6	Transitional	18	9%
7	New Home	24	12%
8	Treatment/Shelter	9	5%
9	Unknown	53	26%
10	Other	1	1%
11	Unfavorable Discharge	10	5%
12	Inappropriate Referral	2	1%
<b>Total clients w/disposition codes</b>		<b>204</b>	<b>100%</b>

The high costs of living in Montgomery County, including childcare, coupled with low-level job skills, make survivors highly vulnerable to further victimization, loss of employment, and chronic homelessness. DV victims leaving BAK often do not qualify or take precedence for transitional and permanent low-cost housing. They also face an average wait for housing vouchers of 2 to 5 years. Moreover, when using the Vulnerability Index (VI-SPDAT), a widely recognized tool for determining the need for housing assistance in Montgomery County, DV victims receive just a one-point priority. Additionally, most victims do not qualify for the Rapid Rehousing Program due to lack of stable employment, poor credit, or criminal record.

Victims can face additional barriers to affordable housing due to poor credit and legal problems stemming from the abuse. Some victims might also have pending immigration cases that prevent them from seeking lawful employment. Furthermore, many housing programs do not favor survivors because of fears that they will bring problems or make the community unsafe.

Finally, most survivors do not qualify for permanent supportive housing services which require a documented permanent disability. Although survivors often suffer from mental illness related to DV, including depression, substance abuse and PTSD, these conditions are not seen as serious barriers to housing. As such, these victims do not meet the criteria for permanent supportive housing and are left with no alternative but living with relatives or friends. They may also find themselves and their children constantly moving to avoid their abusers. This is a daunting task that poses many risks, especially for young mothers with large families. Even the most resilient of these victims are at risk for homelessness or returning to abusers. In turn, many of these victims end up back at BAK after being re-victimized.

Another issue that BAK has encountered is the lack of transitional housing for pregnant women. In FY17, there were 6 pregnant mothers in need of transitional housing. Pregnant women are more vulnerable and more likely to get assaulted when they are in abusive relationships. The literature documents that violence tends to increase and escalate when a woman becomes pregnant.

In the County, there are two tracks for homeless persons to receive shelter; single persons and family tracks. Pregnant mothers do not fit either track. In the single persons' track, pregnant women are not considered because they are carrying a child. For the family track, pregnant women are not considered a family unit. Additionally, the only maternity home in the metro area is St. Ann's in Prince George's County, which does not accept DV survivors because of their high needs, risk of violence, and fears for the community's safety.

## Transitional Housing & Case Management Request

Finding transitional housing and/or a system for prioritizing DV victims' access to long-term housing has been the Board's top priority since FY14.

The Board advocates for a transitional and/or bridge housing program serving young female-headed households most vulnerable to the effects of domestic violence that would:

1. Help break the cycle of violence and dependency
2. Deliver supportive case management services
3. Afford time to build needed life skills (e.g. education, GED, vocational, parenting)
4. Provide increased trauma recovery and empowerment
5. Offer a resolution of housing barriers (e.g. legal problems, identifying appropriate long-term housing)

Such a program would provide service for 1 year, with 3-month extensions, as needed, to achieve progress toward individual growth. A beginning goal would be to accommodate 20 individuals and revisit our previous funding request of \$100,000 for specialized domestic violence case management services to include safety planning, employment readiness, education and all services necessary to maintaining long term safety plans and independence.

The VSAB began to explore the options available for both transitional and permanent housing in its general meetings. An appointed task force met with County leaders to discuss transitional housing options and strategies. Meetings were held with: Dr. Raymond Crowell, Chief of Behavioral Health



Services, to review BAK discharge challenges; Nadim Khan, Chief, Special Needs Housing, DHHS; and Sara Black, Senior Administrator Housing Stabilization Services, to review the County's policies and priorities for the homeless; and David Dice, of the Department of General Services, to discuss renovating the Fleet Street townhouses for use as transitional housing. These meetings took place in FY15.

As a pilot project, four of the Fleet Street townhouses were secured for transitional housing and are currently earmarked for DV victims and their families. The Department of General Services refurbished these homes to house as many as 4 families transitioning from the BAK. These properties were subsequently found to have unsafe levels of lead and deemed uninhabitable. The families were forced to move out. The board would like these properties to be remediated, so they can again be utilized for housing DV victims. However, the Board recognizes that these properties alone will not address the full need for transitional housing for DV victims.

There currently is no budget for appropriate case management services for domestic violence victims. The families cannot be moved into transitional housing until case management is in place. Family Services Inc. applied for a Federal Department of Justice Grant (\$100,000) for case management services, but unfortunately the grant was not funded. The VSAB continues to actively seek funds and support all efforts to raise funds for crucial case management services.

## Priority: funding increase for domestic violence offender groups

### Goals

Trauma Services Abused Persons Program (APP) offers domestic violence (DV) offender groups through a contractor. These groups are ordered by the judicial system to offenders in the County and are mandatory. The VSAB has the following goals regarding this priority:

1. Funding for intensive individual therapy for high-risk offenders
2. Funding for psychiatric medical assessments for medication, as appropriate
3. Funding for the contractor to do intake and offer translation services
4. Totality of the work to be done by the contractor

We believe that additional funds totaling \$115,000 would be required to address this priority.

## Background

APP DV offender groups utilize a best-practice model for treatment of DV offenders in hope of decreasing or eradicating recidivism of offenses. In these groups, offenders learn interventions that help them manage anger, communicate better, and have positive and healthy relationships. Most DV victims want the abuse to stop and not to terminate their relationships. To this end, these groups are valuable.

## Funding and Expansion of Services

The VSAB advocates continued funding of this program and expanding services as follows:

- We are requesting funding for individual therapy for high-risk DV offenders. Priorities include offenders who have mental health issues, are at high-risk to re-offend, or use strangulation. This individualized treatment would help the offender to address high-risk behaviors and lower or eliminate recidivism of domestic violence offenses.
- We are requesting funds for a psychiatrist to assess the medication needs of offenders. This addition would make the DV offender program more comprehensive and improve its effectiveness.
- Initial intake calls by DV offenders are currently handled by the program's (APP) administrative staff. We recommend that this work be done by the contractor, however the budget does not cover this work.
- APP has a contractor for in-person offender intakes, accommodating primarily English-speaking offenders. APP's county employees are still responsible for doing in-person intakes with Spanish-speaking offenders, offenders with other language needs, and translation services. We are requesting that the budget for the contractor include this additional work.

## Priority: policy change on forensic exams for rape and sexual assault victims

### Goal

The VSAB continues to advocate for trauma-informed, patient-centered models to provide quality care and best practices for victims of sexual assault and rape.

### Background

Forensic exams are essential after a rape or sexual assault to collect vital evidence and provide appropriate healthcare. Most of these exams can only be done at one hospital in the County. Victims who go to other hospitals must transport themselves to this one location to get medical care, to gain access to best practices in rape kit examinations, and for best evidence collection for criminal prosecution. Self-transporting to a hospital can be a medical safety issue for victims who must also deal with psychological distress, physical pain and the financial and temporal burden of traveling across the County. This is not in line with a person-centered approach for victims of rape and sexual assault during this most critical time. Every hospital in the County should be able to provide forensic exams by nurses trained to provide quality care and best practices for victims of sexual assault and rape. Another model uses a revolving team of SAFE nurses who provide care at any hospital.

## Priority: victim services directory

### Goal

The VSAB wants to develop a comprehensive guide to services in Montgomery County for victims, including healthcare, mental health, education, substance abuse and more.

### Background

The Board spent considerable effort developing a Victim Services Directory that is a comprehensive guide to services in Montgomery County for victims, including healthcare, mental health, education, substance abuse and more. Creating the directory was a collaborative effort between the VSAB and various programs. Services are categorized according to type and include details such as location, contact information, services provided, populations served, languages spoken, and eligibility requirements.

# Priority: victim services programs vacant positions

## Goal

The VSAB advocates for three (3) full-time victim assistants for VASAP. A funding request of \$196,000 would be required to address this priority.

The VSAB also advocates for funding for a community outreach educator. A funding request of \$20,000 would be required to address this priority.

## Background

There is a need for more HHS Trauma Services Victim Assistants (VAs) to staff the local Circuit and District courthouses in Rockville and Silver Spring. The role of the VA is to help crime victims in the courthouses. VAs play a vital role for victims of crime. What makes Trauma Services VAs different than other VAs is that they are independent of the criminal justice system and are on the front line in our courtrooms. VAs assist crime victims in filing peace and protective orders, accompany victims during trials, help with victim impact statements, hold court school, help in filing family emergency maintenance, attend show cause hearings for DV offenders, and connect victims to needed resources and to the victims' services program. There currently are not enough VAs in the courts to meet the needs of victims. The impact of cuts has resulted in the delay of processing compensation cases for crime victims and less court coverage in both Circuit and District courts, where crime victims seek immediate assistance. In its last report entitled "Critical Scaffolding," Court Watch, an independent court monitoring program, reported that 42% of DV victims did not have a lawyer or victim assistant at their final protective order. In addition, 37% of petitioners who had a victim assistant were granted final protective orders and received family emergency maintenance as opposed to 6% of petitioners who were alone. Moreover, the report calls for victim assistants to staff the courthouses and the victim assistant's offices whenever the court is open to help petitioners.

VASAP was not re-awarded a grant that funded a community educator who visits 10<sup>th</sup>-grade classes in County high schools. This community educator played an important role in informing students about how to obtain and give consent for physical interactions. This is vital prevention work. Funding to restore this valuable position would benefit our entire community.

## Priority Progress

During this reporting period, the VSAB has communicated to the County Executive and County Council its priorities via:

- Testifying to the County Council Health and Human Services Committee in October 2018
- Meeting with Special Assistant to the County Executive, Charles Short in February 2019
- Sending letters to County Executive Marc Elrich and Council President Nancy Navarro in March 2019
- Meeting with Council Vice President and Chair of the Public Safety Committee, Sidney Katz in April 2019
- Meeting with Councilmember and Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, Gabe Albornoz in April 2019
- Meeting with Council Senior Legislative Analyst, Linda McMillan in April 2019
- Testifying before the County Council for the Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget in April 2019
- The Board has completed the final draft of the directory and the final product will be available in electronic format via the VASAP website soon
- The VSAB was provided a tour of the facilities at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital for Sexual Assault Nurse Exams (SAFE) in January 2019 and discussed the current program with its director, Jessica Volz
- The Board has sought to collaborate more with the Interagency Commission on Homelessness (ICH) to address the lack of transitional housing for DV victims. The Board testified in April 2019 at the Interagency Coalition on Homelessness public hearing on funding priorities. The ICH determined priorities in preparation for HUD's release of the 2019 Notice of Funding Availability for the Continuum of Care (CoC) Consolidated Application. Based on existing needs and the Commission's goal of ending homelessness for families with children by the end of 2020, ICH approved to use HUD CoC bonus funding for victims of domestic violence to invest in more Rapid Rehousing for both families and individuals fleeing domestic violence.

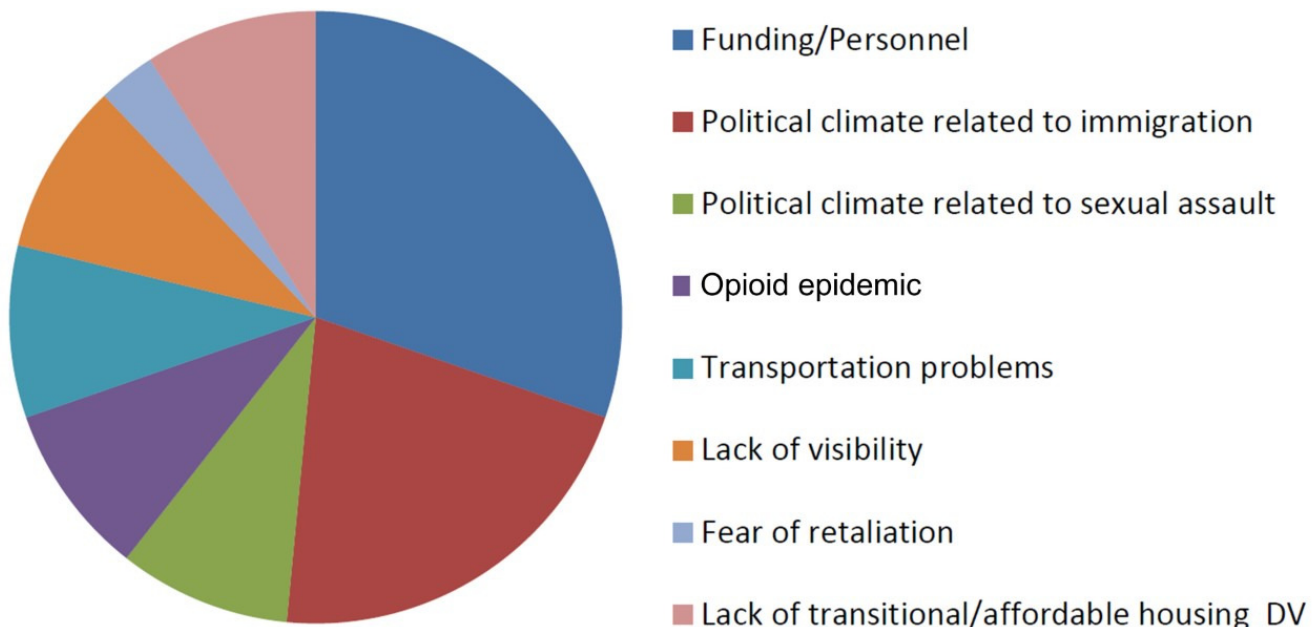
## Identifying Future Priorities

Throughout Montgomery County, there are many programs to assist victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. These programs have been providing services to victims not only in the County but throughout the state of Maryland. They have been providing excellent care to victims by providing legal assistance, medical attention, and even assisting survivors in creating a new stable, safe life.

The VSAB assessed several Montgomery County victim service providers for its 2017-2018 annual report. Primarily, the Board was interested in knowing the goals of the service providers, what needs the providers have, and how the VSAB can help the service providers meet their goals and address their needs. The detailed report on the VSAB's assessment can be found in our 2017-2018 annual report available online here:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs.program/BHCS/VASAP/VASAPABoard.html>.

We would like to remind the County Executive and County Council of the major challenges that our County's service providers face in accomplishing their missions and goals (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1: Major challenges faced by Montgomery County service providers**



When service providers were asked how the Victim Services Advisory Board can help them in their role as an advisory committee to the Montgomery County Council and Executive, several themes emerged:

- Advocate for more funding for their programs and encourage the Executive and County Council to restore budget cuts
- Encourage the County Council and Executive to create more grant opportunities for their agencies
- Raise awareness about the services provided by each individual agency as well as issues pertinent to victims of violence
- Continue to advocate for transitional housing options and case management for victims of violent crimes
- Advocate for training opportunities, particularly in trauma-informed care

The VSAB intends to do another needs assessment for its 2019-2020 annual report.



# Victim Services Advisory Board

*Advocating for Victims of Crime*



## **Administrative Support**

Nadja S.P. Cabello, L.C.S.W.-C., Dr. Rafiah H. Prince and Maria Carzon

Victim Services Advisory Board

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