

Victim Services Advisory Board

Advocating for Victims of Crime



Montgomery County, Maryland
Fiscal Year 2019 – 2020
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 2019-2020 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 enough 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 Marrone¹, PhD, MBA
Robin Stimson¹, MSW
Kathryn Pontzer², JD, LL.M.
Juanita Rogers², MS, CHES®

¹Co-Chairs, Victim Services Advisory Board during reporting period

²Current 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 (DV), 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 intended to assist 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.

While social distancing restrictions are in place for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the Board will meet virtually using Microsoft Teams.

Members



Liz Briganty-Vidal, LCSW

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 VASAP

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



Brian D. Koosed

Board member since July 2019

"I was interested in finding a way to support and help victims in the community, based on personal experience and my work as a lawyer."



April Marrone, PhD, MBA

Board member since January 2017 (co-chair July 2018 – June 2020)

“I joined the VSAB to help my community be even stronger.”



Kathryn Pontzer, JD, LL.M.

Board member since January 2018 (co-chair since July 2020)

“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.”



Juanita Rogers, MS, CHES®

Board member since July 2019 (co-chair since July 2020)

“I joined the Victim Services Advisory Board (VSAB) to help my local community while amplifying the voices of and advocating for victims and survivors of crime.”



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 July 2018 – June 2020)

"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."

Neda Bolurian*
Quintaria Brunson*
Cinder Cooper-Barnes**

Amos Hicks*
Jessica Leslie*
Kecia R. Lopes, MPA, MSW**

Sorell Schwartz**
Sally Reid, MSCJ**

*profile information not available for this member

**members resigned during this reporting period

Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members

Ellen Alexander (Montgomery County Police)
Caroline Sturgis (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)
Dr. Rafiah H. Prince (Trauma Services: APP and 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:

- bridge and permanent housing for victims of domestic violence transitioning from the Betty Ann Krahnke (BAK) Domestic Violence shelter;
- budget funding increase and expansion of services for domestic violence offender groups;
- County policy change on forensic exams for rape and sexual assault victims;
- filling vacant positions needed by victim services programs;
- creation of a victim services directory; and
- 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 Sidney Katz;
- meeting with staff for Council 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 Councilmember and Chair of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, Hans Reimer;
- meeting with staff for County Executive, Marc Elrich;
- meeting with staff for Councilmember and member of Health and Human Services Committee, Craig Rice;
- testifying to the Interagency Coalition on Homelessness public hearing on funding priorities;
- meeting with Director of Montgomery County Department of General Services, Greg Ossont;
- meeting with Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Services to End and Prevent Homeless Chief, Amanda Harris and acting DHHS, Behavioral Health and Crisis Services Chief, Teresa Bennett;
- meetings with members of the Montgomery County delegation of the 2020 Maryland General Assembly;
- attending meetings with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission (CJCC);
- touring the Betty Ann Krahnke Center;
- reporting at Montgomery County DHHS Director's Quarterly Leadership Meeting with Boards, Commissions and Committees; and
- interviewing staff and management from DHHS Trauma Services – which includes the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) and the Abused Persons Program (APP) - about the important victim services they provide and identifying potential areas for improvement.

Service Provider Interviews

For this annual reporting period, the VSAB assessed several Montgomery County victim service providers. The Board identified service providers to interview as time and resources allowed in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Primarily, the Board was interested in knowing the goals of the service providers, what needs the providers have, and how the VSAB can help them meet their goals and address their needs.

VSAB Legislative Activity

As part of its advocacy activities, the Board identified legislative initiatives of the 2020 Maryland General Assembly session that can improve the safety and rehabilitation of victims of crimes. Early in the legislative session, the Board met in both the County and Annapolis with members of the Montgomery County delegation. Several Montgomery County senators and delegates hold key positions on the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee and the House Judiciary Committee. Many in the delegation have been outspoken leaders in initiating changes to improve the lives of victims of crime. The Board also submitted letters of support at the Committees' hearings.

Among the Board's legislative priorities, laws were passed that:

- Designate intentional strangulation as assault in the first degree, to further prevent a perpetrator from relying on the use or threat of strangulation as a coercive tool to control a victim of crime such as domestic violence or human trafficking;
- Allow all victims of rape or sexual assault to seek a protective order rather than a peace order requiring a longer period of protection to 12 months and removal of firearms; and
- Expand Maryland's Vacatur Law for survivors of human trafficking who are often forced to commit crimes for their traffickers, as their criminal records often create obstacles to obtaining housing, employment and other needed services in the County.

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 DHHS Trauma Services and to educate the public about available services. To learn more about us, please find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/Victim-Services-Advisory-Board-of-Montgomery-County-MD-240170336583329/>.

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 final draft of the directory was completed by the Board in May 2019. We hope that the final product will soon be available in electronic format via the VASAP website.

Priority: bridge housing for victims of domestic violence

Goals

The VSAB has the following goals regarding this priority:

1. Ensure safe, bridge housing to end homelessness for domestic violence victims so that they can become self-sufficient survivors;
2. Identify bridge housing units for 20 survivor families; and
3. Allocate funding for in-depth and targeted case management.

Background

The Betty Ann Krahnke 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 and case management to assist trauma survivors with safety planning, and other necessary 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. Bridge 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 DV-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 remain at BAK for an extended period because they are unable to find appropriate housing, they prevent higher-risk or immediate-danger victims from gaining access to safe shelter.

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 in 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 pursue their goals for independence. Motels also do not provide ongoing case management and safety planning, which increases victims’ risk for danger and re-assault. Specifically, the most up-to-date data show that annually:

- BAK serves ~200 domestic violence victims.
- 8-12% of discharged victims need Montgomery County emergency services and are housed in motels. This is ~20-30 victims and potentially their children.
- Approximately 5% of discharged victims return to their abuser. This is ~10 victims.

Domestic violence victims cannot be protected from their abusers while staying in motels or when they move from one family member to the next. When victims are unable to receive needed services and support, they sometimes return to their abusers to prevent further homelessness.

Included is the BAK discharge summary for FY18-FY20 (Tables 1-3).

Table 1: BAK Disposition Summary FY2020

Code	Disposition	Count	Percent
1	MoCo Emergency Svcs (Motel/short term)	17	11%
2	Family/Friend	47	31%
3	Return to Abuser	3	2%
5	Home with Protective Order	13	9%
6	Transitional	4	3%
7	New Home	17	11%
8	Treatment/Shelter	9	6%
9	Unknown	13	9%
10	Other	1	1%
11	Unfavorable Discharge	10	7%
12	Inappropriate Referral	7	5%
13	Didn't stay at shelter, bed held	9	6%
Total clients w/disposition codes		150	94%

*Of 158 total adult clients, there is a disposition code for 150

Table 2: BAK Disposition Summary FY2019

Code	Disposition	Count	Percent
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%
Total clients w/disposition codes		187	95%*

*Of 200 total adult clients, there is a disposition code for 187

Table 3: BAK Disposition Summary FY2018

Code	Disposition	Count	Percent
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%
Total clients w/disposition codes		217	95%*

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

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. 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, domestic violence victims receive just a one-point priority. Additionally, some victims have not qualified 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 domestic violence, 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.

Bridge Housing & Case Management Request

Finding bridge 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 bridge housing programs 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; and
5. offer a resolution of housing barriers (e.g. legal problems, identifying appropriate long-term housing).

Ideally, 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 other services necessary to maintaining long-term safety plans and independence.

The VSAB began to explore the options available for both bridge and permanent housing in its general meetings. An appointed task force met with County leaders to discuss transitional housing options and strategies. In FY15, as a pilot project, homes on Fleet Street in downtown Rockville were identified for renovation and use for bridge housing for DV victims and their families. Case work was provided by a

VASAP employee in addition to the employee's other responsibilities. That is, no case worker was dedicated to families in these homes. The Department of General Services refurbished the 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 has requested that these properties be remediated, so they can again be utilized for housing DV victims. However, the Board was informed by DHHS Services to End and Prevent Homelessness that housing may not be utilized for DV victims. The Board was informed of this decision in Fall 2019.

The Board continues to advise that there is a need to identify and earmark bridge housing for domestic violence victims leaving BAK without a safe place to go. We are encouraged by the County's FY21 Operating Budget that intends to expand the number of slots available in the Rapid Rehousing Program, including slots specifically designated for households fleeing domestic violence. However, we acknowledge that this is only a beginning effort to address the need in our community. The Board continues to actively seek funds, and to support all efforts to raise funds, for crucial case management services.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care (CoC) bonus funding for victims of domestic violence can be used to invest in more Rapid Rehousing for both families and individuals fleeing domestic violence. The Board also advises that HUD CoC Domestic Violence bonus funding be requested in the Interagency Commission on Homelessness (ICH) CoC Consolidated Application to HUD. To be included in the application, a County service provider must agree to provide services and meet minimum requirements. In the past, service providers have not met these requirements and, as a result, domestic violence bonus funding was not included in the ICH Consolidated Application to HUD. The Board believes that increased awareness of the grant writing process and qualification requirements would help service providers to be more successful in the future. The Board advises that training be offered to potential service providers so that this important funding can be obtained for domestic violence survivor housing.

Priority: funding increase and expansion of services for domestic violence offender groups

Goals

Trauma Services Abused Persons Program (APP) offers domestic violence offender counseling groups through a contractor. These groups are ordered by the judicial system for 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 conduct intake and offer translation services; and
4. Totality of the work to be done by the contractor.

Background

APP domestic violence offender groups utilize a best-practice model for treatment of offenders in effort to decrease or eradicate recidivism of offenses. In these groups, offenders learn interventions that help them manage anger, improve communication, and have positive and healthy relationships. Most domestic violence 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 Board has advised on funding of this program and expanding services as follows:

- We requested funding for individual therapy for high-risk domestic violence 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 requested 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 domestic violence offenders are currently handled by the program's (APP) administrative staff. We recommend that this work be done by the contractor; however, the current 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 requested that the budget for the contractor include this additional work.

The Board is pleased to report that the County has put forth a request for proposal (RFP #1110701) to expand the APP offender group's scope to align with that advised by the Board. Solicitation responses are currently being evaluated.

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 and Priority Status

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 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 developed a comprehensive guide to services in Montgomery County for victims, including healthcare, mental health, education, substance abuse and more. The Board would like for this directory to be made publicly available.

Background and Priority Status

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: increased staffing for victim services programs

Goal

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

VASAP was not re-awarded a grant that funded a community educator who visits 10th-grade classes in County high schools. The 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. The VSAB advocated for funding for a community outreach educator. A funding appropriation of \$20,000 is required to address this priority. Dr. Raymond Crowell, Psy.D., Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), informed the VSAB that DHHS would fund the community outreach educator through the DHHS budget.

Background and Priority Status

There is a need for more Trauma Services victim assistants (VAs) to staff the local Circuit and District Courts 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. Trauma Services VAs are different than other VAs in that they are independent of the criminal justice system and are on the frontline 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. **Reported in 2019 by Court Watch ("From "Catch-22" to Equal Justice"); an independent court monitoring program, 46% of domestic violence victims did not have a lawyer or victim assistant at their final protective order hearing.** Having an advocate helps in determining final protective orders and guaranteed monitored exchanges of children with the noncustodial parent. Advocates can provide information to the courts that links abusers to attend the State Certified Abuser Intervention Program offered by APP. Advocates add good value in a County with budget constraints. Per the Court Watch report, in most cases the data show that advocates make an impact equal to lawyers in helping victims obtain orders and key provisions.

Identifying Future Priorities

Throughout Montgomery County, there are many programs that assist victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. These programs provide services locally and throughout Maryland. They deliver excellent care to victims by providing legal assistance, medical attention, and assisting survivors in creating a new stable, safe life.

For this annual reporting period, the VSAB assessed several Montgomery County victim service providers. Primarily, the Board was interested in knowing the goals and needs of the service providers, and how the VSAB can help them meet their goals and address their needs. The Board identified service providers and requested that they fill out a questionnaire. Some service providers were interviewed about questionnaire responses, as time and circumstances permitted considering the COVID-19 pandemic (**Table 4**).

The following information was reported to the VSAB via the Board's questionnaire. No additional information about the service provider is included in this report. Some responses are paraphrased to aid readability. Responses received within the requested deadline are included in this report.

The VSAB last conducted a service provider survey for our 2017-2018 annual report.

Populations Served and Services Offered

Table 4 provides the name of the service providers who provided responses to the Board’s questionnaire and/or were interviewed, the number of victims served, the populations served, and the mission/priorities of the service provider. Responses are taken from the questionnaire.

Table 4: Montgomery County Providers of Victim Services names, number of victims served, populations served, and the mission/priorities

Service Provider (N = Average number victims served annually)	Mission	Population(s) Served*
¥House of Ruth Maryland (N = 81 MC adults and 26 MC children; N = 874 (legal clinic))	Mission: end violence against women and their children by confronting the attitudes, behaviors and systems that perpetuate it, and by providing victims with the services necessary to rebuild their lives safely and free of fear	victims of intimate partner violence and their children regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity, gender or social group identification
¥Montgomery County Pre-Trial Services (N = 700 supervised domestic violence cases; services are not provided to victims, but help ensure victim safety from offenders)	Mission: ensure all eligible defendants are afforded the opportunity for pre-trial release and to enhance public safety by providing community monitoring and referral to services that will increase the likelihood of appearance for trial and to reduce the risk for re-arrest	anyone charged with a crime and placed under pre-trial supervision
¥Betty Ann Krahnke Center (BAK) (N = 500 (mostly children); number of clients is increasing)	Mission: provide a safe’ haven for single women and their children who are fleeing domestic violence, sexual assault or escaping human trafficking; cultivate a safe, nurturing and welcoming environment where survivors can connect to community resources	women and children
¥Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington (KCSC) (N = 236 victims of domestic violence, elder abuse and financial exploitation in Washington D.C. metro area; decreased from last year)	Mission: assist and empower Asian Americans and new immigrants to become well-adjusted and fully contributing members of the United States through social services, education, advocacy, and development of resources	Asian American domestic violence, sexual assault/dating violence victims, especially focusing on Korean and Chinese
¥Family Justice Center (FJC) (N = 1,627; consistent upward trend since 2016)	Mission: promote safety, well-being, and healing for victims of family violence	any victims of domestic violence/partner violence
¥Shady Grove Adventist Hospital Medical Unit (N > 720, upward trend in numbers)	Mission: provide all victims of violence with timely access to expert forensic medical services	all victims of assault, abuse and neglect
¥Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) Special Victims Investigational Division (N =	Mission: provide support resources and referrals in the immediate aftermath of victimization	all persons

almost 7000; lower than last year, but pretty consistent)		
Service Provider (N = Average number victims served annually)	Mission	Population(s) Served*
‡Domestic Violence Survivors Legal Services (N ~ 400; numbers are consistent)	Mission: to provide families impacted by domestic violence with affordable access to legal assistance and resources	all MC residents
‡Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA) (N = 330 for in-person individual therapy; N = 173 with legal services; N = 130 through victim advocacy program; see growth due to increased service)	Mission: support victims of power-based violence to become empowered and live safely; educate the community about power-based violence and appropriate responses; and prevent future generations from suffering power-based violence	all residents of the Greater Washington community
‡Court Watch Montgomery (N = NR)	Mission: reduce intimate partner violence by ensuring that all victims have access to justice and to vital services so that the abuse can be stopped quickly and permanently	victims without resources
*Safe Passage Center (N = 2633; numbers are increasing)	Mission: close the gap for families impacted by domestic violence who are court ordered to continue visitation services with a noncustodial and nonresidential parent	court-ordered families
Trauma Services (N =2,871) Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP)/Abused Persons Program (APP)	Mission: provide crime victims in Montgomery County with comprehensive services that will restore victims to their previous condition before the trauma	crime victims who are residents of the county or victims who had crimes perpetrated against them in the county
State’s Attorney’s Office (N = NR)	Mission: to assist victims through the criminal prosecution process, inform victims of available services, help to ensure compliance of victims’ rights requirements under the law, assist prosecutors in the coordination of victims and witnesses; serve all victims and witnesses in criminal cases in the Circuit Court	victims of all crimes in Montgomery County, including all races, genders, gender identities, adults, children, mentally impaired, etc.

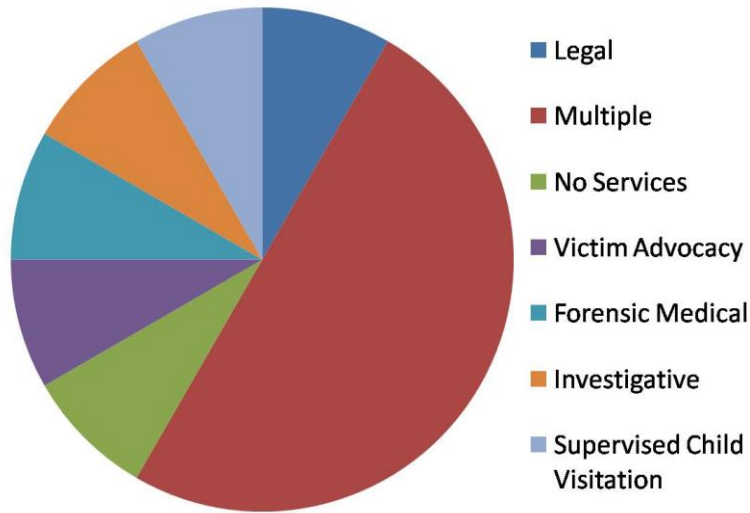
* unless otherwise noted, services are offered regardless of race, gender, gender identity, immigration status, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or any other discriminatory factor

‡provider reports that they interact with other county, state, federal, or other programs/organizations/departments

NR = not reported to VSAB interviewer

MC = Montgomery County

Figure 1 details the types of service categories offered by the providers.



Service Provider	Service(s)
House of Ruth Maryland	Multiple: 24-hour hotline and crisis counseling; emergency residential options; legal advocacy; clinical; service coordination.
Montgomery County Pre-Trial Services	No services
Betty Ann Krahnke Center	Multiple: shelter; counseling; case management; legal advocacy; nursing; child care; meals; immediate needs; referrals
Korean Community Service Center	Multiple: case management; counseling; legal consultation; court accompaniment; interpretation/translation; information; referral; housing assistance
Family Justice Center	Multiple: Safety planning; assistance with protective orders; assist with writing petitions for protective orders, applying for social services; service information
Shady Grove Adventist Hospital	Forensic Medical
Montgomery County Police Department	Investigative
Domestic Violence Survivors Legal Services	Legal
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse	Multiple: trauma specific therapy; workshops; victim advocacy; legal; animal-assisted services; helpline
Court Watch Montgomery	Domestic violence victim advocacy
Safe Passage Center	Court ordered supervised visitation services and monitored exchange services
VASAP/APP	Multiple: counseling; psychiatric care; victim advocacy; shelter; victim compensation; crisis hotline/intervention; lethality assessment; service information and referral; safety planning; sexual assault victim
State's Attorney's Office	Multiple: notification of case and court hearings; victim information packet of services available to them, including VASAP/APP; oral interpretation and written translation in Spanish; utilizes court-appointed interpreters to assist with translation in other languages

Figure 1: Service providers were asked, “What programs and/or services do you offer for victims?” The pie chart summarizes the answers, whereas the table below provides more detail regarding which provider offers what type of service. Answers were simplified and paraphrased as necessary for this report.

Of the twelve (12) service providers who provided a response to the questionnaire and/or were interviewed, five (5) provided demographic information for the victims served as follows:

- House of Ruth reported in their counseling program agency wide (12% of which are in the Montgomery County Counseling Program):
 - 97% of victims served are female;
 - 27% identify as married, 35% single, 18% separated or divorced;
 - 3% identified as being in a same gender relationship;
 - The median number of children per victim was 2;
 - 19% are under age 30, 55% are between 30 and 44, remainder are older than age 45;
 - 39% identify as African, African American or Black (with 5% identifying as African),
 - 14% identify as Caucasian,
 - 3% identify as Asian;
 - 37% identify as Hispanic in ethnicity;
 - 32% of victims spoke Spanish as a first language
 - 42% of victims were employed full or part time

House of Ruth reported in their legal services agency wide (23% of which are Montgomery County adults):

- 92% of victims served are female;
 - 11% identify as married, 20% single, 4% separated or divorced;
 - 6% identified as being in a same gender relationship;
 - The median number of children per victim was 1.
 - 30% are under age 30, 50% are between 30 and 44, remainder are older than age 45;
 - 53% identify as African, African American or Black (with less than 1% identifying as African),
 - 17% identify as Caucasian,
 - 3% identify as Asian;
 - 23% identify as Hispanic in ethnicity;
 - 6% of victims spoke Spanish as a first language
 - 61% of victims were employed full or part time
- Montgomery County Pre-Trial Services reports that they serve many offenders suffering from mental illness and substance abuse and well as from lower socio-economic areas.
 - Betty Ann Krahnke Center (BAK) reports that their population is diverse, serving women and children from different countries, religions, social groups, cultures, languages and ages.
 - Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA) reports approximately 45% of their clients identify as religiously or ethnically Jewish.

- Safe Passage Center reports that of the center services, approximately 35% are for Spanish-speaking parents.
- Trauma Services VASAP/APP

RAPE/SEXUAL VIOLENCE REFERRED, Total Served 695

Race/Gender/Age	FY 20
Caucasian	21%
Black	40%
Hispanic	30%
Asian/Pac. Islander	6 %
American Ind/Esk/Aleu.	1%
Other	2%
Males	22%
Females	78%
0-2 years	0%
3-12 years	4%
13-17 years	13%
18-59 years	73%
60 + years	10%

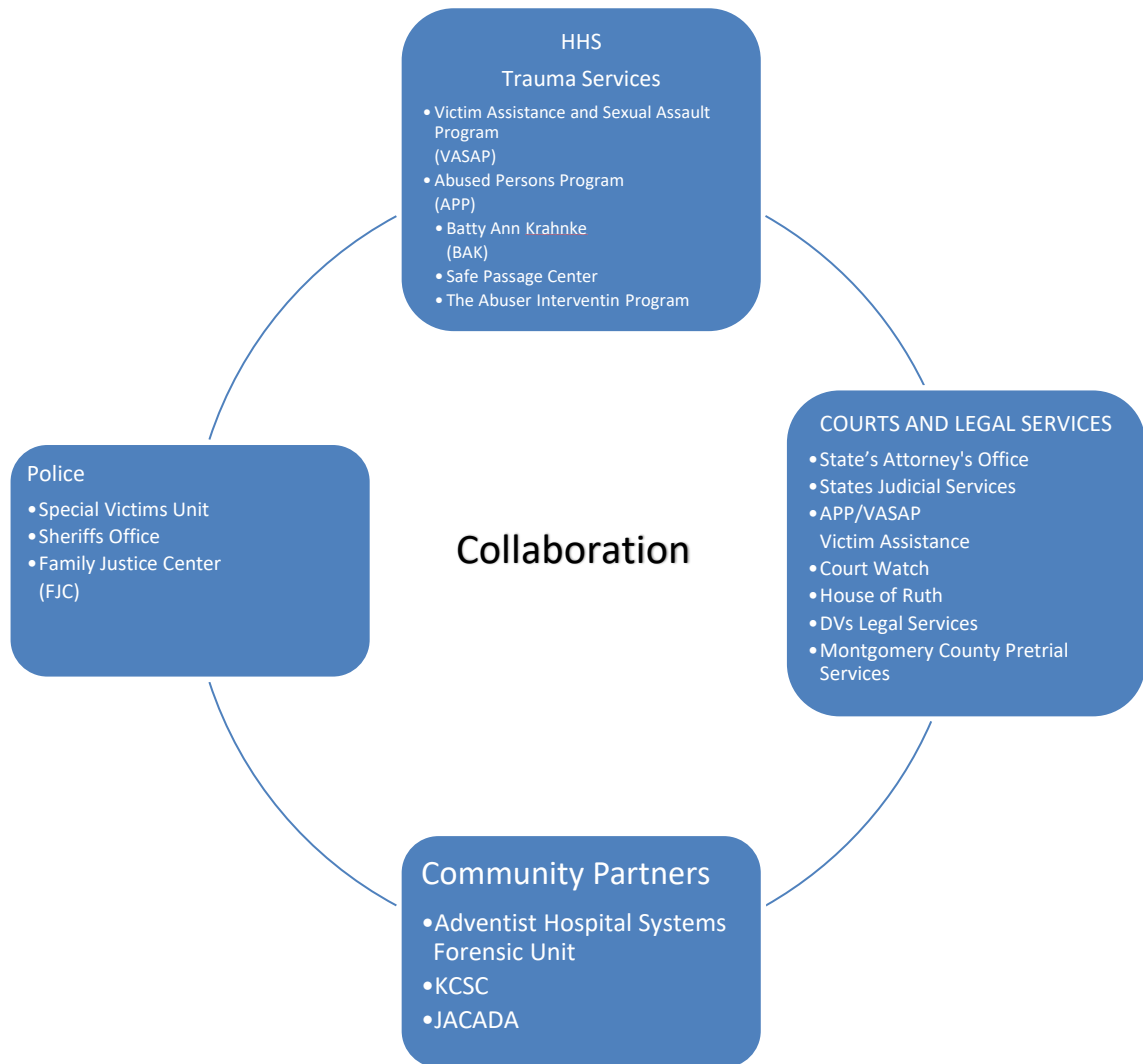
GENERAL CRIME VICTIMS, Total Served 938

Race/Gender/Age	FY 20
Caucasian	21%
Black	31%
Hispanic	39%
Asian/Pac. Islander	7%
American Ind/Esk/Aleu.	0%
Other	2%
Males	32%
Females	68%
0-2 years	0%
3-12 years	5%
13-17 years	6%
18-59 years	74%
60 + years	15%

APP FY 20 STATISTICAL DATA, total served 1238

Race/Gender/Age	FY 20
Caucasian	18%
Black	37%
Hispanic	35%
Asian/Pac. Islander	5%
American Ind/Esk/Aleu.	1%
Other	4%
Males	36%
Females	64%
0-2 years	1%
3-12 years	0%
13-17 years	1%
18-54 years	86%
55-64 + years	7%
Unknown	5%

Inter-Provider Collaboration



We asked service providers what programs/organizations they work with to meet victim needs. Figure 2 provides a depiction of the responses that we received. It is important to note that County service providers work with each other and the local and State governments to meet the needs of victim **Figure 2: Service providers were asked who they work with to provide services. Responses are depicted where arrow direction indicates the collaborating entity (at arrow end) identified by the interviewed service provider. Interactions were not inferred if not reported in response to the questionnaire.**

Financing of Services

Victim service providers and organizations throughout Montgomery County were asked a series of questions related to their individual need for financial servicing and support.

Service providers are generally funded as follows. Of the eleven (11) providers who were asked about funding sources:

- Six (6) service providers utilize federal/state/local grant programs.
- Seven (7) service providers receive funding directly from the County government.
- Six (6) providers receive funding from private or other sources.
- One (1) provider did not provide a response.

Just two (2) service providers stated that they believed that they had adequate funding; however, four (4) service providers did not state definitively whether they had adequate funding or not.

Funding to hire full-time experienced staff is a primary need of the providers and organizations interviewed. Five (5) service providers (5 out of 12) reported that they did not have adequate staffing; and only five (5) service providers (5 out of 12) reported that staffing was adequate. A significant strain is placed on current employees of understaffed organizations. Funding for robust staff salaries is necessary to reduce employee turnover, provide periodic training, and attract employees with distinguished qualifications. Additional funding for these organizations will also assist with transportation, housing, and office space. More information on challenges facing service providers is summarized in the Provider Concerns section below.

Fluctuations in budget can have a great impact on the organizations interviewed. Ten (10) of twelve (12) service providers said that budget fluctuation would impact their ability to provide services. The lack of stability in funding places Montgomery County victims at risk of not receiving the essential care and support needed after traumatic events. County victim services are often the initial introduction to services that victims may access after experiencing a hardship. A consistent budget is necessary for organizations to meet their service needs.

Seven (7) of the service providers (7 out of 12) use volunteers to help carry out their mission. Volunteers help to ease the strain of full-time employees by offering the experience and knowledge to assist victims of crime in a timely manner. Volunteers throughout Montgomery County are generous with their time and commitment. A few of the organizations have benefitted greatly by maximizing the use of highly qualified volunteers. Volunteers also assist organizations in achieving their overall missions of serving the community's crime victims.

The role of the Victim Services Advisory Board in relation to the financing of services for these organizations is to advocate for their ability to function at full capacity. The need for victim provider services and organizations is evident throughout the County.

Provider Performance

Service providers have different ways of collecting data and measuring success. Many focused on feedbacks provided by their clients, but some collect quantitative data. By looking at this data, they can continuously evaluate their programs and improve accordingly. The information is used for developing the program and monitoring trends. **Table 5** outlines how providers reported that they measure success and what quantitative data they collect. Eleven (11) service providers were asked how they measure success and what quantitative data are collected.

Table 5: Measurements of provider success

Service Provider	Measurement of Success	Quantitative Data Collected
House of Ruth Maryland	Measuring Success outcomes model; tracks a number of data points to assess if programs are positively affecting clients	data gathered on client service engagement, service provision, and progress toward outcomes
Montgomery County Pre-Trial Services	appearance rate, public safety rate, and compliance rate	appearance rate, public safety rate, and compliance rate, number of victim letters sent
Betty Ann Krahnke Center (BAK)	established outcomes and measurable goals used by the contract monitors to evaluate success of the program	engagement in services, safety or ability for individuals to return to a safer living, engagement in attaining protective order and report of client satisfaction for services rendered
Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington	process evaluation and outcome evaluation of the project team	number of calls received, the number of cases referred, case/progress notes, and client satisfaction survey
Family Justice Center (FJC)	Client follow-up, and data on what services are provided	client demographics and services rendered
Shady Grove Adventist Hospital Medical Unit	number of patients served, patient participation in follow-up care and feedback from community stakeholders	volume, advanced certification of staff, schedule vacancies, and patient follow-up rate
Service Provider	Measurement of Success	Quantitative Data Collected

Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) Special Victims Investigational Division	satisfaction surveys, lack of complaints to internal affairs, lack of expressed concerns from victims, documents processes to ensure consistency and quality of services	services provided and type of crime, adult vs. juvenile victims, DV-related incidents, frequent referral agencies, number of court hearings, number of protective orders, and number of applications for compensation
Service Provider (N = Average number victims served annually)	Mission	Population(s) Served*
Domestic Violence Survivors Legal Services	victims becoming survivors or knowing they have a place to go when ready	track outcomes and representation of all protective order/peace-order cases; track all clients and services provided
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)	Measuring Success outcomes model; tracks a number of data points to assess if programs are positively affecting clients	Percentages of clients meeting outcome measures; change over time in outcome measures
Court Watch Montgomery	rates of best practices used by clerks, interpreters, bailiffs and judges; and improvements in existing process for obtaining full legal protection	data on civil protective orders and criminal DV cases
Safe Passage Center State’s Attorney’s Office	parent surveys Time spent with victims, the number of victims able to be referred; the number of victims who exert their rights and fill out the Crime Victim Notification Request Forms and sign up for VINE	data on victim services Number of victims and individuals serviced; the types of services provided; demographic information of those serviced; and current challenges and successes.
Trauma Services		
Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) – Trauma Services	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder check list (PCL-C)/Child Scale: Child’s reaction to traumatic event scale-Clinical	FY 20 results, 93% improvement of symptoms Child Scale: FY20 results, 92% improvement of symptoms
Abused Persons Program (APP) – Trauma Services	Stages of Change Scale	FY 20 results, 95% improvement of symptoms

Service providers were also asked if they are pursuing any opportunities and/or initiatives relevant to the victim services that they provide and what are the major obstacles or challenges in pursuing them.

Table 6 provides this information for the providers who volunteered information. The listed initiative(s) may not be the only opportunity/initiative that the service provider is currently pursuing and lack of this information here does not mean that the service provider is not pursuing opportunities and/or initiatives.

Table 6: Current Initiatives of service providers who reported this information

Service Provider	Opportunity/Initiative
House of Ruth Maryland	re-establish Safe Homes Strong Communities rapid re-housing program; workforce development partnerships, and applying for flexible funding to provide assistance in obtaining birth certificates, transportation assistance, lock changes, moving costs, and other one-time stability services; expand staffing to include a dedicated Community Educator in the Montgomery County/Prince George’s County area; hire another full-time family law attorney to represent victims who need representation in divorce and custody cases
Betty Ann Krahnke Center (BAK)	secure houses to pilot a transitional/supportive program for those individuals who struggle most with escaping the cycle of abuse; County residency is a problem and there is a long housing waitlist and few housing options through Department of Health and Human Services - most housing options are for families rather than individuals
Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington	continually researching and pursuing new opportunities and initiatives (as they are available) to enable KCSC to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate comprehensive services for Korean and Chinese victims; often confront limited resources to help clients
Family Justice Center (FJC)	always pursuing new partnerships and opportunities to grow network of on- and off-site service providers; working on updating technology for client intake and record-keeping; major challenges in this regard are (1) ensuring there is enough physical space at the FJC for the many collaborative partnerships, and (2) ensuring funding necessary to sustain and enhance these efforts
Shady Grove Adventist Hospital Medical Unit	exploring an expansion of forensic medical services to sister hospital, White Oak Medical Center in Silver Spring; hiring and training additional forensic nurses to serve the growing patient populations are challenges to this expansion
Domestic Violence Survivors Legal Services	hire another attorney to take cases but it is difficult to get funding and difficult to find qualified attorneys who are willing to work for money we can pay them
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)	Building Better Allies (BBA) and victim advocacy, both of which developed in response to specific community needs; launching a community engagement initiative called Friends of JCADA; major obstacle routinely faced is the inability to meet the demand for services, and the limited resources that are available for any type of proactive or preventative services; funding for prevention, education, and training is scarce, which makes JCADA’s prevention, education, and training work cost-prohibitive for many organizations
Court Watch Montgomery	change judicial behavior: Maryland judges are among the least accountable in the country due to the very long terms they serve and the lack of any judicial evaluation program which 17 states have; thinking about creating a very broad coalition (everyone from Black Lives Matter to the police union to the League of Women Voters want more judicial accountability) to educate state legislators and pass a judicial evaluation program; trying to change the perceptions around “best practices” for judges; looking at specialty Domestic Violence Courts, such as those in Brooklyn, which have a social work focus (supported by lead judge in MD) and can address both civil and criminal cases and even go so far as “one family one courtroom” and include child support, divorce, etc., but very expensive
State’s Attorney’s Office	Retrofitting the waiting room to accommodate reception of victims and witnesses in our office once the courthouse reopens from the COVID-19 closure.
Trauma Services Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP)/Abused Persons Program (APP)	Adding staff to meet the demands of crime victims and their needs. This would include additional victim assistance staff in district, circuit court houses, and to complete county compensation claims.

Provider Concerns

Service providers were asked what specific challenges they face in serving the County’s victim population. **Table 7** lists the specific responses from providers who answered this question.

Table 7: Service provider challenges

Service Provider	Major Concerns/ Challenges
House of Ruth Maryland	victim financial resources: continual wearing down of financial resources through court proceedings, lack of financial resources for divorce and custody issues, housing resources, lack of access to a phone, lack of organizations helping victims with representation in legal issues related to DV, but not protective orders
Betty Ann Krahnke Center (BAK)	non-Montgomery County residents lack access to services and supportive housing options, shelter stay is too short to establish individual plans and save money and legal issues take longer than the shelter stay, no housing options or support if families are placed in hotel/motel, Abused Persons Program has a long wait list for therapists, undiagnosed mental health and substance abuse issues, immigration status, health issues and underinsured, no money/lack of employment history, poor credit, lack of education, community judgment against women who are in a cycle of abuse, Child Protective Services and lack of support, lack of legal support/no attorneys taking family cases, multi-layer issues and long history of generational DV issues
Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington	victim financial resources for childcare, difficulties in serving the low to medium income clients as they are not eligible for certain benefits while not earning enough to afford paying for private attorneys
Family Justice Center (FJC)	victims of domestic violence often are too afraid to seek help or move forward with their safety plan
Shady Grove Adventist Hospital Medical Unit	ensuring the public is aware of the scope of our services and how to access them
Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) Special Victims Investigational Division	transportation for victims - there aren’t enough programs that have evening hours
Domestic Violence Survivors Legal Services	diversity of the citizens of Montgomery County leading to language barriers, cultural issues difficult to navigate, size of the County can make it difficult for some victims to access services
Service Provider	Major Concerns/ Challenges
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)	meeting the clients where they are geographically, and in the most culturally humble way
Court Watch Montgomery	general stereotypes that make new programs harder
Safe Passage Center	access to language support
State’s Attorney’s Office	Ensuring adequate funds and maintaining safety of the staff and public as reopening occurs following the COVID-19 closure

Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP)/Abused Persons Program (APP) – Trauma Services	Ensuring that victim services are maintained at the appropriate staffing levels. That there is a housing solution for victims transitioning out of the BAK. In addition, the Abuser Intervention Program (AIP) is better funded, so that the contractor can provide the entirety of services.
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Service providers were specifically asked, *“Does substance misuse affect the services and/or persons that you provide services to? If so, how?”* Eight (9) of the eleven (11) providers commented that substance abuse impacts the need for the services that they provide. For example, substance abuse may be an excuse offered to defend abuse or victims may turn to substance misuse to deal with trauma experienced. In some cases, substance misuse may impact the ability to provide services when the misuse impacts eligibility for services.

Service providers were also asked, *“How has the opioid epidemic affected the services and/or persons that you provide services to?”* Only two (2) of the eleven (11) providers commented specifically that the opioid epidemic affects the services that they provide. Opioid addiction may limit an individual’s ability to participate in services offered to them and increases their susceptibility to victimization.

Service providers were also asked, *“Have legal/medical issues associated with marijuana impacted your program/organization? If so, how?”* Only two (2) of the eleven (11) providers commented specifically that marijuana affects the services that they provide. One provider did not elaborate, other than to say that services were impacted by marijuana. The other service provider stated that therapy is not able to start with individuals who are actively using substances. Service limitation based on marijuana use for medical reasons or legal recreational reasons is concerning.

Legislative Interests

Service providers were asked what legislative efforts they have or need that they would like the Victim Services Advisory Board to be aware of. **Table 8** lists specific responses from providers who answered this question.

Table 8: Interviewed Montgomery County Providers of Victim Services Legislative Interests

Service Provider	Major Concerns/ Challenges
House of Ruth Maryland	advocating for a bill HB 248/SB 210 – Protective Orders – Relief Eligibility – Rape and Sexual Offenses - bill would change the definition of “person eligible for relief” in a protective order to include anyone who alleges s/he is a victim of a rape or sexual offense, clarifying that they are eligible to receive a protective order rather than a peace order.
Betty Ann Krahnke Center (BAK)	threat to VAWA funding and services; decrease in money to substance abuse services and mental health services; decrease in housing support and efforts to provide housing support efforts; domestic violence victims are not considered a protected category nor do they get priority for housing support or benefits in the community
Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington	“Model Minority” discrimination/misconceptions; many fears/misinformation leading some clients to turn down benefits for which they are eligible and which are not included in the public charge issue; housing – increasing anti-immigrant housing practices (e.g., tax return for proof of income, refusal to rent to someone with undocumented status); protection for victim advocates when subpoenaed by perpetrators; MD Health Connection phone system problems when need language-specific help (choice of language should be given at beginning of phone call)
Shady Grove Adventist Hospital Medical Unit	Improved reimbursement rates and improved reimbursement to cover the entire scope of services offered
Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) Special Victims Investigational Division	state compensation fund should stop reducing compensation
Domestic Violence Survivors Legal Services	support the strangulation bill that is adding strangulation as a first-degree assault
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)	no dedicated funding stream for victim services programs at State level; strangulation is not a felony in Maryland; federal rhetoric and policies around immigration, public benefits, and violence against women are damaging to the served populations; Violence Against Women Act and the Family Violence Prevention and Services funding has yet to be renewed
Court Watch Montgomery	Judicial Evaluation Program; strangulation being made a felony; regulating long guns (rifles, shotguns) which are now invisible to police and sheriff staffs; need to modernize state databases so that gun ownership and criminal database can talk to each other
Trauma Services- Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP)/Abused Persons Program (APP) – Trauma Services	support the strangulation bill that will add strangulation as a first-degree assault.

VASAP/APP

The mission of the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP)/Abused Persons Program (APP) – Trauma Services is to provide crime victims in Montgomery County with comprehensive services that will restore victims to their previous condition before the trauma. VASAP/APP offers staff support for the VSAB.

The VSAB interviewed staff and managers of VASAP/APP and asked them generally what was working for the program and where there was room for improvement. The commitment that staff and management must serve our County's victims was evident in the discussion. General concerns included the current staffing level's ability to fully meet all victim needs. Specifically, there is a need for additional full-time employees to serve as Victim Assistants in the courtroom. This concern aligns with the VSAB's priority identified in this report.

There is also a need for additional staff to man the APP intake line and a need for additional therapists for the APP program.

In addition, VASAP has lost critical funding from a grant that supported their community education program. The community educator provided presentations to 10th grade health classes in Montgomery County schools. These presentations were based on the 10th grade health curriculum, used the best practice models for prevention, focused on consent, bystander intervention, and sexual assault prevention. This program is of great need with the recent cases of sexual assaults in the school system over the last two years that have made national headlines. VASAP has reorganized their budget to pay for this position for now, but this is not a sustainable solution. The Board is requesting \$20,000 to restore this valuable prevention program. We seek input on whether the DHHS can provide this funding.

The County offers a victim compensation fund; however, the current County regulation limits the amount available to \$2,500. If the financial cost to the victim exceeds this amount, additional compensation must be sought from the State. When additional State compensation is sought, the County compensation is held awaiting a final determination by the State. Increased limits on compensation could help victims get compensated faster. Additional guidelines on the use of this fund would also be beneficial.

VSAB Support

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.

Providers frequently asked for additional resources, primarily financial. They requested that the Board advocate to the Executive and County Council to increase funding for their programs, prevent budget cuts and create more grant opportunities for their agencies. As a result of an increase in these financial resources, they hope to expand services that they offer to victims and increase the number of staff available to serve victims.

Service providers also discussed expanding their services by collaborating with other service providers to offer a more holistic approach to treatment. In addition, they asked Board members to raise awareness about the services provided by each individual agency as well as issues pertinent to victims of violence. Furthermore, service providers requested that Board members continue to advocate for transitional housing options and case management for victims of violent crimes. Lastly, service providers identified a need to offer providers training opportunities, particularly in trauma-informed care.