

# VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

FY 2016-2017  
ANNUAL REPORT



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

Montgomery County, Maryland  
2016-2017 Annual Report  
*Advocating for Victims of Crime*

## MISSION STATEMENT

To support 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, 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. Additionally, the board submits actions needed to improve those programs.
- Make recommendations for appropriate allocation of funds in accordance with priorities and the consideration of financial resources.

The Board also assists the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services in the development of the Annual Victim Services and Families Plan. Moreover, it acts as a local advocate for victim services programming.

**Montgomery County Code -- Art. VII, Section 24-56.**

**Visit Our Website:**

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/vasap](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/vasap)

[www.vasap.org](http://www.vasap.org) (Click on Advisory Board)

**Page 2:**  
Mission/Mandate

**Page 3:**  
Message from the  
Chairs

**Page 4:**  
Meetings and  
Membership

**Page 5:**  
Board Interaction

**Page 6 & 7:**  
Major Issues

**Page 8 & 9:**  
Awareness Plan and  
Advocacy

**Page 9:**  
Fundraising

**Page 9 & 10:**  
Budget Priorities

**Page 10 & 11:**  
FY 2018 Budget  
Priorities



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRS, Alana Ward & Sally Reid

Dear County Executive Leggett and County Council:

In this annual report, we are pleased to share the Victim Services Advisory Board's (VSAB) initiatives and priorities for FY 2016-2017. We 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. Our priorities and accomplishments are:

## **2016-2017 Priorities:**

- Advocated for transitional and permanent housing for victims of domestic violence transitioning from the Betty Ann Krahnke Domestic Violence shelter.
- Support non-governmental agencies and non-profits that advocate for victims.
- Advocate for the filling of vacant positions needed by victim services programs.
- Create a victim services directory.

## **2016-2017 Accomplishments:**

- Helped to secure Fleet Street properties for victims of domestic violence.
- Advocated on behalf of victim's programs and needs to County Officials
- Created an awareness plan for the VSAB and Trauma Services: the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) and Abused Persons Program (APP).

The VSAB will continue to dedicate its time to identifying the needs of crime victims to ensure that they are being met, considering our County's current financial constraints. In addition, VSAB will continue to recognize the importance of community and providing quality services to crime victims in need, 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

Sincerely,



Alana Ward & Sally Reid

Co-Chairs, Victim Services Advisory Board



# MEETINGS AND MEMBERSHIP 2016

## MEETINGS

The Board meets the fourth Thursday of each month from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; at the Office of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services at 1301 Piccard Drive in the Fourth Floor Conference Room in Rockville, Maryland 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.

## MEMBERSHIP

Alanna Ward (co-chair)  
Sally Reid (co-chair)  
Sorell Schwartz  
Gerda Gallop-Goodman  
Bonnie Muheim

Josephine Magnaye  
Parker O'Shea  
Rosemary Pascarella  
Anita Pinto  
Betty Smith  
Steven Whitehorn

## EX-OFFICIO

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)  
Maria Carzon (HHS)



# BOARD INTERACTION

- Board members toured the Betty Ann Krahnke Center (BAK), a shelter for victims of domestic violence who are fleeing their abusers, and met with its Director.
- Board members toured the Family Justice Center (FJC).
- Board members attended the Annual Volunteer Ceremony for Trauma Services and celebrated 40 years of services provided by the Abused Persons Program.
- Board members attended the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee's (CJCC) monthly meeting.
- Board members attended quarterly meeting with the Director of HHS and other Commissions within HHS.
- Board members attended the Annual Meeting with George Leventhal and other County Council representatives.
- A Board member attended the Annual Meeting with the County Executive and provided testimony on Trauma Service staffing needs.
- Board members created a victim services directory of the County's victim services providers.
- Board members crafted an Awareness Plan to promote knowledge sharing of available victim services in the County. A media advisory and press release were issued for the Trauma Services Volunteer Recognition Ceremony in April 2016.
- Board members provided testimony before the County Executive on policy needs, funding gaps, and staffing issues for crime victim's programs.



# MAJOR ISSUES

## TRANSITIONAL/PERMANENT HOUSING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS LEAVING THE BETTY ANN KRAHNKE CENTER

Finding transitional housing and creating a system for prioritizing domestic violence victims' access to long-term housing was the VSAB's top priority since FY2014 and to date.

**Discharge challenges at the Betty Ann Krahnke Center (BAK):** The 2013 VSAB report documented the challenges faced by domestic violence victims leaving the BAK. These victims are provided temporary shelter and appropriate wrap-around services at the BAK. However, domestic violence victims often over stay the recommended period of residency of 2 to 3 months due to the unavailability of transitional and long-term housing. Many clients remain at the BAK for up to 6 months. Those unable to transition from the BAK to safe conditions are provided temporary hotel housing, which is expensive and wholly inadequate for maintaining protection from abusers. The Board considered the need for a transitional housing program focused on serving young female-headed households, the most vulnerable to the effects of domestic violence that would accomplish the following:

1. Support breaking the cycle of violence and dependency.
2. Deliver supportive case management services that targets victims' needs and promotes successful transition out of an abusive relationship.
3. Afford time to develop self sufficiency (e.g.; education, vocational training, parenting skills, etc.).
4. Increased trauma recovery and promote empowerment.
5. Resolve barriers to housing such as legal issues and identification of appropriate long term housing.
6. This program will provide service for one year, with three month extensions, as needed, to achieve progress toward individual independence.

**Transitional Housing:** Two of the Fleet Street properties has been secured for transitional housing and are currently earmarked for domestic violence victims and their families. Unfortunately, because the homes have not been zoned for multi-family use, these units can house fewer families than anticipated – only two families instead of four. This



creates challenges, as the space is perceived to be more efficient if these units house larger families. However, many families transitioning out of the BAK are smaller families. While the properties are earmarked for domestic violence victims, BAK families still may have to fit the family size criteria for these units for optimal use in a community where various populations are in need of housing.

## MAJOR ISSUES

An additional obstacle is the lack of funding for appropriate case management services for domestic violence victims. Family Services Inc. has since applied for a Federal Department of Justice Grant (\$100,000) to provide these case management services, but unfortunately the grant has been denied twice. VSAB will continue to actively seek and support all efforts to raise funds for crucial case management services. Although the allocation of the two Fleet Street properties as sites for transitional housing is a positive step, there is still a much larger need for additional transitional housing, affordable long-term housing, and funds for intensive case management.

**Permanent Housing:** Permanent (long-term) housing for domestic violence victims is essential to ensure the continued safety and stability of this physically and psychologically vulnerable population. Furthermore, domestic violence victims face significant challenges that can hinder their progress, including: (a) the high cost of living in the county, (b) lack of education and vocational skills, and (c) the physical/emotional effects of complex trauma.

Many victims leaving the BAK do not qualify for, or have precedence to receive, permanent low-cost housing. The average wait is one year for a housing voucher. Domestic violence on the housing wait-list is worth a one-point allowance which does not provide enough points to secure permanent housing. Many victims are faced with additional challenges in securing permanent housing, such as bad credit and/or unresolved criminal charges often resulting from attempts to defend themselves from their abusers; as well as cross-charges filed by the abuser.

Furthermore, many domestic violence victims are rendered unqualified for the County housing program because they do not meet the added requirement of having documented disabling conditions. In addition, some victims do not meet the criteria of “persistent mental illness” that would qualify them for McKinney grant housing. Often with no alternative but living with a relative or friend, with constant moves to avoid their abusers, even the most resilient of these victims are at risk for homelessness or returning to abusers. To ensure their long-term safety, BAK clients should be prioritized for access to long term housing. The Board will continue to rally the County Council and the Executive for this important priority.



# AWARENESS PLAN

It has been important for the VSAB to increase awareness of Trauma Services available in the county. VSAB has established an initiative to improve the collaboration and promotion of victim's services and resources in Montgomery County. This includes; educating the public, media and other County agencies about Trauma Services. This in turn aids in fostering ongoing relationships with like-minded groups. The Board has successfully helped with press releases and media advisories for the Annual Volunteer Ceremony and the celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Abused Persons Program. Additionally, the Board established a clearinghouse for victim services by creating a comprehensive victim services directory of county resources for victims.

## INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY TO STATE LEGISLATORS

Until very recently the VSAB was not authorized by charter to lobby before the State Legislature. Members could advocate for victim-related legislation. This has been a crucial part of its function. Members are apprised of upcoming victim-related legislation. Additionally, they are regularly briefed on bills sponsored by the Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center (MCVRC), Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV), as other County, and State agencies throughout the year.

In 2016, the VSAB advocated against the privatization of alcohol sales in the County by sending a letter to the County Executive. The board is committed to maintaining the safety of its citizen in the community. The board feels strongly that the privatization of alcohol sale in the County would be detrimental to the safety of its citizens. The Board's primary concern is that privatization of alcohol sales in Montgomery County will have unwelcome health and safety consequences for our community, particularly vulnerable populations. With an increase in retail alcohol outlets, often clustered in high density areas, comes the potential risk of more violent crime, including gun assaults, sexual assaults, and alcohol related vehicular accidents.

Furthermore, VSAB believes that deserving beneficiaries, including crime victims, of County social service, educational, and law enforcement programs are at risk for being





adversely affected by the privatization of alcohol sales. The estimated \$30 million in lost revenue in the County's budget will be detrimental to these County programs, and as such, will exasperate the impact of alcohol related crime. For these reasons, the Victim Services Advisory Board respectfully requests the support of the County Executive to advocate for the continuation of the current controls regarding alcohol sales in Montgomery County. As a Board concerned with the needs of victims and the services provided to them, we offer our assistance in this endeavor to develop recommendations that are fair to both residents and businesspeople in the County.

The VSAB will continue its efforts to stay abreast of, and advocate for, current and future legislative priorities for crime victims and their families

## FUNDRAISING

The Board intends to prioritize fundraising in the upcoming fiscal year. The Fundraising committee of the Board will continue to explore ways to raise additional monies for the fund. The statute that governs the Montgomery County Crime Victims' Compensation Fund allows 10% of the fund to be spent on advertising and holding fundraising events.

## BUDGET PRIORITIES FY 16-17

The VSAB supports Montgomery County's commitment to serving victims of crime. Victim services contribute to physical and mental health and safety within the community. They are part of the County government's fundamental responsibilities and should be a priority in the next fiscal year.

Overall, victim services have absorbed severe budget cuts even as the County population continues to increase. The decrease in funding and staffing levels has had a negative impact on many services for crime victims.

The VSAB has identified the following budgetary priorities:

- Increasing available housing for domestic violence victims – As noted earlier, a positive step was taken through the allocation of two Fleet Street properties, but due to family size restraint there is a need to identify additional transitional housing



locations that would be eligible to more families. Moreover, the Board will continue to explore ways to help in securing permanent long term housing for domestic violence victims.

- Restoring and maintaining Trauma Services staff to levels of services: Trauma Services has had four therapists retire within six months. The extended vacancies of therapists in an already over committed environment means a collapse of the support structure for victims of crime. Since these therapists also oversee the VASAP outreach program for immediate in-hospital support of rape victims, the impact of these vacancies will be felt throughout Trauma Services countywide. Therefore, the immediate replacement of retiring therapists is necessary to prevent the deterioration of services and extended waitlists.

## FY 2018 BUDGET PRIORITIES

- Priority #1: Resolve Housing Issues for Domestic Violence Victims and Their Families.

Through the efforts of the VSAB working with County offices, a transitional housing program for at least two young female-headed households will be instituted at Fleet Street properties, county-owned property that has been reserved by the county for domestic violence victims and their families transitioning out of BAK. The Board was instrumental in getting the Fleet street housing. Although it is a positive step to have the two properties, due to a zoning issue, only large families can move in (six members) to these units. Special Needs Housing provided two homes on Gainer Road to place smaller families, but this in no way addresses the much larger need for affordable transitional and long-term housing for victims. As the County, has made it a priority to eradicate homelessness for the Veterans with great success, we aim to end homelessness for domestic violence victims. VSAB in the past has met with Chuck Short, Special Assistant to the County Executive and members of county housing programs and housing advocacy groups to identify strategies to increase the availability of viable housing stock for domestic violence victims and families in need of long-term housing. Additionally, we need about \$100,000 for case management needs for this new initiative.

- Priority #2: A policy change on the County level for forensic exams for rape and sexual assault victims to occur in all hospital in our Jurisdiction.

The forensic exam after a rape or sexual assault is critical in collecting evidence and preserving the health of a rape and sexual assault victim. Currently, many of these



examinations are being done at one hospital in the County. This is not in line with a victim centered approach for victims of rape and sexual assault during this critical time. A victim may go to one hospital for help in the county and if that hospital does not provide the exam, the traumatized victim must transport her or himself to the only hospital that does. This could mean that a victim could drive across the County with injuries and critical evidence as a result of the assault. VSAB advocates that all hospitals in the County provide forensic exams to rape and sexual assault victims by forensic nurses, to provide quality care, and best practices for victims of sexual assault and rape.

- Policy Issue #3: To advocate for a budget funding increase for domestic violence offender groups.

Trauma Services (Abused Persons Program) offers domestic violence offender skill building groups through a contractor. Offenders are ordered by the County judicial system to attend these groups, and attendance is mandatory. These groups utilize a best practice model for treatment of domestic violence offenders in hope of decreasing or eradicating recidivism of domestic violence offenses. In these groups, the offenders learn interventions that help them manage anger, communicate better, and learn how to have positive and healthy relationships. Sixteen groups needed to be cancelled this past fiscal year because of lack of funding. The clinical contractor that helps with domestic violence Male offender intakes additionally was an HHS unfunded budget pressure. Most victims want the abuse to stop and do not want to terminate their relationships; these groups are valuable in helping the abuse to stop. The program needs \$72,400.00 to fund more groups, the intake person, and the possibility to provide intensive individual therapy for high risk offenders.



# VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD



## **Administrative Support**

Dr. Rafiah H. Prince and Maria Carzon provided support for the Board.

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