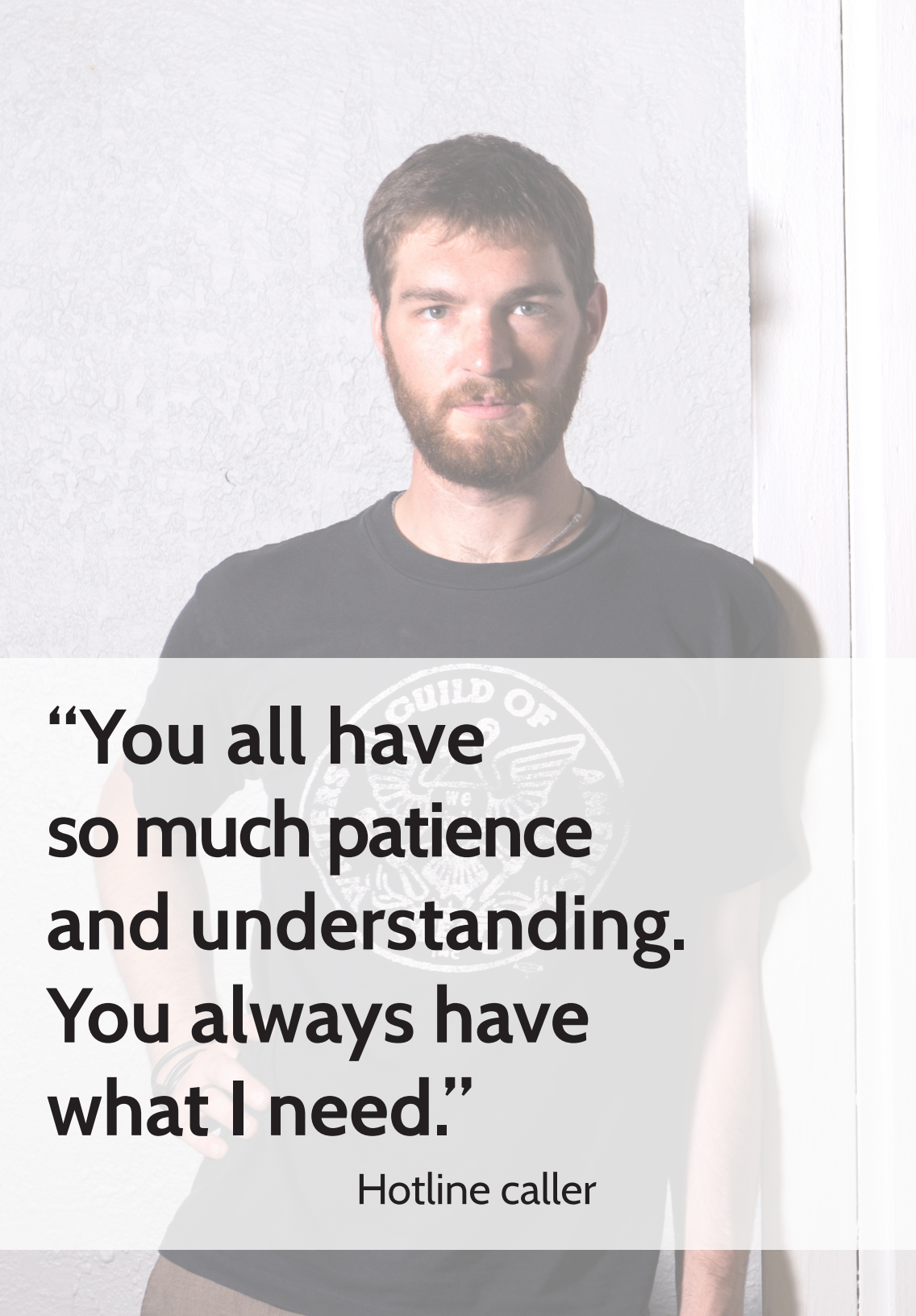


Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline

22 years of life-saving advocacy





**“You all have
so much patience
and understanding.
You always have
what I need.”**

Hotline caller

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual and intimate partner violence are serious public health and safety issues.

While huge strides have been made in our response to sexual and intimate partner violence in the past 30 years, many victims suffered decades of silence, fear, and isolation in a society that failed to acknowledge the seriousness of violence against women. With limited social support and little resources, women had few options for safety and support. Confidentiality and privacy are an essential element to providing safety and respectful advocacy services. Women's hotlines quickly became a vital, confidential resource for women to share their stories, seek help, and organize for change. Hotlines continue to be a vital service for breaking through the silence and isolation and connecting individuals to resources and essential services.

The Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline (Hotline) provides direct access 24/7/365 to experts with specialized training in sexual and domestic violence who provide lifesaving, trauma-informed services and practical tools for safety and healing.

SCOPE

- Toll free, confidential, 24/7/365 hotline for victims, friends or family, allied professionals, and the general public.
- Trained sexual and domestic violence experts who provide crisis intervention, risk assessment and safety planning, support, and information and referrals to community-based services.
- Compassionate and culturally-appropriate services to all callers.
- Bi-lingual staff and access to language interpretation services.
- Answer calls on behalf of 23 sexual and domestic violence agencies during evening, weekend and holiday hours; trainings; staff meetings; and inclement weather.
- Specialized services to incarcerated individuals who are victims of sexual violence.
- Culturally appropriate and sensitive services to the LGBTQ community through the "LGBTQ Helpline".
- Chat and cell phone text features.

IMPACT

Since inception, the Statewide hotline has taken measures to monitor the quality of our services.

We conduct follow up calls with at least 15% of callers annually. These calls are only conducted with the callers' permission and after the Crisis Services Specialist has ensured that they feel safe to receive the call. Our Bilingual Crisis Specialist conducts these calls with Spanish speaking callers and has felt the callers' relief to be able to communicate in Spanish.

In 2014, we made 295 follow up calls (28% to Spanish speaking callers). In 2015 (through June 30th), we made 212 follow up calls (23% to Spanish speaking callers). 95% of callers contacted reported their crisis and support needs were met. The follow up service also shows us the difference these calls make:

"Because of the help you provided me, I am not sleeping in the streets."


"Thank you! I called the program and yes, I got an appointment for counseling."

"Thank you for checking on me."



"She gave me choices and talked with me for a long time. She was the only one who listened and talked to me in an emergency situation."

Hotline caller

A woman with short dark hair and glasses is seated at a desk, talking on a telephone. She is holding a pen to her chin. The background wall is covered with several informational posters. One poster on the left reads "Virginia Sexual Assault Hotline 1 800 838 8238". Other posters visible include "Stalking", "Child Sexual Abuse", and "Domestic Violence".

“I’m so glad you have a service like this...because I cannot talk to my friends or family members.”

LGBTQ Helpline caller

CLOSING THE GAP

In 1993 there were significant service “gaps” across the Commonwealth and limited resources. Where programs did exist, 25% were unable to operate on a 24-hour basis.

The Virginia General Assembly increased funding for domestic violence with a mandate that such funding support opening a statewide hotline. The establishment of a toll-free statewide hotline was an important step to ensure that victims, regardless of where they lived, had 24 hour access to crisis services. The Hotline received both direct calls from victims and served as a backup to local domestic violence programs’ hotlines. In 1997, sexual assault services were added and local Sexual Assault Crisis Centers began subcontracting with the Hotline. Since its inception, the Hotline has been a compassionate, knowledgeable resource for victims of sexual and domestic violence, family and friends, and professionals—including local Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies.

2005 Office of Family Violence established. Its duties include:

“...work with the Statewide Domestic Violence Coalition to: (a) develop policies and procedures that guide the work of persons providing services to victims of domestic violence and their children; (b) implement methods to preserve the confidentiality of all domestic violence services records pursuant to § 63.2-104 in order to protect the rights and safety of victims of domestic violence; (c) collect, prepare, and disseminate statistical data on the occurrence of domestic violence and the services provided throughout the Commonwealth; (d) operate the Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault 24-hour toll-free hotline and the Statewide Domestic Violence Database (VAdata); and (e) provide a clearing-house of information and technical assistance on intervention and prevention of domestic violence...”

1993 Virginians Against Domestic Violence (VADV) receives contract to establish a statewide toll free Hotline. The Family Violence Statewide Hotline starts taking calls in November. Trained advocates answer calls weekdays from 8-5. The Hotline subcontracts with Help in Emergency Response in Portsmouth to respond to calls after hours. This followed an appropriation of state funds from the General Assembly to VDSS for a domestic violence statewide hotline.

1993-1994 During first 2 months the Hotline responds to 394 calls; in its first year the Hotline answers 1,497 calls from victims and over 6,000 total calls.

1995 Virginia Housing Development Authority makes Language Lines accessible at no charge. The Rappahannock Council on Domestic Violence subcontracts to respond to calls overnight and weekends.

1997 VADV works with Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault (VAASA) to add sexual assault services to the Hotline, establishing the Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline. This followed an appropriation of state funds from the General Assembly to DCJS for a sexual assault statewide hotline.

1998 The Hotline expands and formalizes coverage for local Sexual and Domestic Violence Agency hotlines to enhance their capacity to ensure 24/7/365 access to trained experts. 15 local SDVAs contract with the hotline, paying a small fee based on agency size to cover Hotline operating costs.

The Statewide Hotline Advisory Council is established to provide leadership and guidance to publicizing the Hotline and to support the effective operation of the statewide Hotline.

1999 The Hotline takes its 100,000th call.

2002 The Hotline adds bi-lingual Spanish-speaking staff.

2010 30 local SDVAs contract with the hotline; the Hotline experiences a 28% increase in calls.

2011 The Hotline employs 2 full-time Spanish-speaking advocates who respond to 838 hotline calls related to Spanish-speaking survivors. A third of those calls came directly from Spanish-speaking survivors.

2013 The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Hotline launches to provide specialized services to incarcerated individuals who are victim of sexual violence.

A 12-hour, Monday to Friday Helpline is added for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) victims of sexual and intimate partner violence.

MEETING THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF SURVIVORS

The Hotline has operated continuously at the Coalition for the past 22 years. During that time, the Hotline has been constantly expanding and evolving to meet the diverse and changing needs of victims/survivors throughout the Commonwealth.

STATEWIDE HOTLINE

The Statewide Hotline is toll-free, confidential, and available 24/7 to provide crisis intervention, compassionate support, effective advocacy and safety planning, and informed referrals to services across the state to survivors of sexual and domestic violence, their partners, family and friends. The Hotline provides information and referrals to professionals and the general public.

The chat/text feature lets people who are less likely to use traditional voice lines—those under 30, those who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, and males—to seek help using the online communication tools they use every day.



LOCAL SDVA HOTLINE COVERAGE

The Action Alliance is fortunate to have strong collaborations with local agencies to link callers to community-based services. In addition to responding directly to calls to the Hotline, the statewide Hotline has been a reliable and consistent “back-up” for local agencies who do not have the financial resources to staff a hotline 24-hours a day with trained advocates. Local agencies also often refer callers to the Hotline when they have complex safety and/or legal issues.

Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies (SDVAs) pay an annual fee ranging from \$0 to \$6000 for this service.

PREA HOTLINE

The PREA hotline, staffed by the statewide hotline, provides specialized services to incarcerated individuals who are victims of sexual violence. The PREA Hotline provides incarcerated individuals direct access to crisis and support services, as well as an external method for reporting sexual violence, as required by the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act.

The PREA hotline also links incarcerated victims to hospital accompaniment services through trained victim advocates when victims request this service.

The Action Alliance and the Department of Corrections collaborate to provide specialized training to PREA advocates across the state.

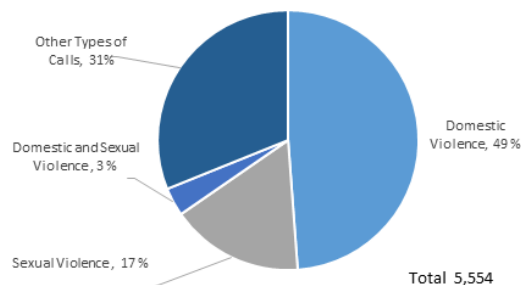
LGBTQ HELPLINE

The LGBTQ Helpline offers culturally appropriate support, safety planning, and information on intimate partner violence and sexual assault to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer or questioning callers. LGBTQ survivors may experience barriers to reporting violence such as threats from an abusive partner to out the survivor's sexual orientation or gender identity and discrimination from service providers.

The Action Alliance partners with the Virginia Anti-Violence Project to develop resources and referrals and ensure that staff receive specialized training.



SERVICES PROVIDED: 2014



TYPE OF CALL	
Domestic Violence	2,712
Sexual Violence	918
Domestic and Sexual Violence	196
Other Types of Calls	1,728
TOTAL	5,554

A hotline call is any call in which crisis or support services were provided to a person directly affected by violence, family or friend of person directly affected, parent/guardian, or professional working with a victim/survivor or perpetrator.

Hotline calls to SDVAs most often relate to the issues of sexual and/or domestic violence but may relate to other concerns and needs as well (e.g., suicide, homelessness, etc.).

LOCAL HOTLINE COVERAGE: 2014

- **27 agencies** forwarded their phones in 2014, for a total of **166,893 hours** of Hotline coverage.
- We answered **11,802 calls** on behalf of local hotlines.
- **1,957** of those calls required immediate response from the center's on-call staff.

FAST FACTS

When is the Hotline most busy?
Between 8am-10am and 4pm-7pm.

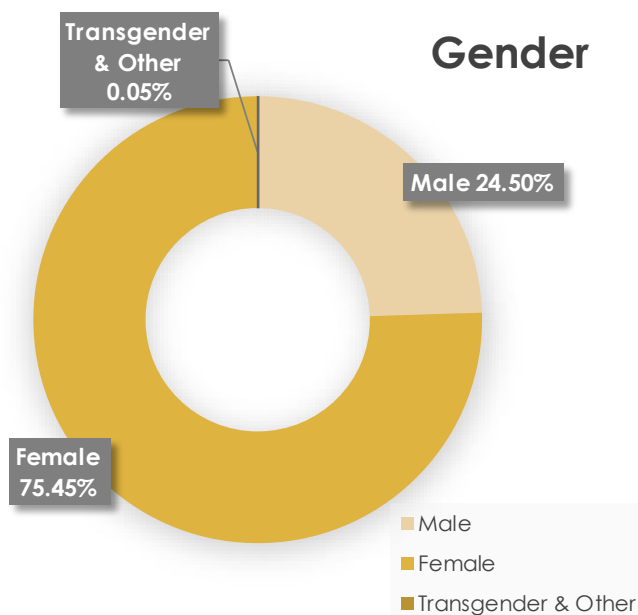
How many calls do you receive?
On average, we answer about 1,425 calls per month.

Do you ever miss calls?
No, because we have 2-3 Crisis Services Specialists available all the times.

What is the average wait time?
We have 5 incoming lines, so callers never have to wait to speak to an advocate.

Average length of a Hotline call?
15- 20 minutes.

THE HOTLINE ANSWERS CALLS FROM...



HELP. EVERY TIME.

While our core services remain the same, every call is unique and the services we provide depend on the nature of the call and the needs of the caller.

While one Crisis Services Specialist is helping a suicidal caller, another Crisis Services Specialist may be talking with a caller about the impact of violence on children and providing information about child custody and support. Crisis Services Specialists are frequently helping callers deal with a wide range of issues, including but not limited to, homelessness, employment and economic security, immigration related concerns and services, divorce information and proceedings, landlord and tenant issues, and general information on civil and criminal information and proceedings.

RECENT CALL:

A recent female caller to the statewide Hotline identified herself as an immigrant from El Salvador. She reported that she spoke little English, and that her abusive husband restricted her access to any help or support. The Crisis Services Specialist utilized a Language Line interpreter initially to fully understand the request and then provided her with a Spanish-speaking specialist, who was also an expert in immigration issues. The Crisis Services Specialist was able to provide the caller with information that her husband had misled her about what might happen if she tried to leave him and that there was legal help available to her. This caller has maintained contact with the Hotline; she was able to safely leave and is living with a family member. The statewide hotline linked her to local domestic violence counseling and legal services.



“We are grateful you took our lines last week when our power went out during inclement weather; our callers still got services.”

Local SDVA which forwards their hotline to Statewide Hotline

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Confidentiality is an essential element to protect the safety of victims of sexual and domestic violence. State and federal law have strong confidentiality provisions that limit the sharing of victims' identifying information. In order to minimize the risk of breaching confidentiality, any identifying information collected from callers shall be kept in a secure location and is not disclosed without the fully informed, written, and reasonably time-limited consent of the person receiving services.

The coalition maintains an online searchable referral database that can be used by hotline staff and local Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies that contract with the Statewide Hotline. The database has a listing for every county and major city in Virginia that includes emergency and business contact information for the Domestic and Sexual Violence Programs, the local Department of Social Services, Law Enforcement agencies, Court Services Units, Magistrates, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations, General District and Circuit Courts, Health Departments, immigration services and other public agencies that are frequently accessed by victims.

In order to provide a statewide safety net for victims across the Commonwealth, it is essential to ensure uninterrupted access to services and sustain high quality Crisis Services Specialists with expertise in sexual and domestic violence and knowledge of a wide-range of statewide resources.

SPECIALIZED SERVICES

The Action Alliance employs 3 bi-lingual (2 bicultural) staff, contracts with the Language Lines to provide language interpretation services, and trains staff to respond to TTY and Relay calls to ensure that Hotline services are accessible to all callers. The Language Line provides interpreter services in over 200 languages using over 1,500 interpreters from across the United States.

PROGRESSIVE TECHNOLOGY

The Action Alliance maintains a phone system that links the main hotline offices and sub-contract site. There are at least 5 lines available to minimize callers being put on hold and there is a battery backup in case of a power outage.

A chat/text feature was launched to reach people under 30 and others who prefer not to talk via phone. The chat/text provides the same services as the voice line and complies with state and federal confidentiality requirements.

CULTURALLY COMPETENT STAFFING

The Statewide Hotline employs a diverse staff. The Action Alliance maintains 1 full time staff Crisis Services Specialist and 6 part-time Crisis Services Specialists. All staff receive ongoing training and supervision to support effective services to ALL callers regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, physical and intellectual ability, and ability to speak English. Three hotline staff are bilingual (Spanish/English) and two staff are bilingual/bicultural. All Hotline staff must complete 40 hours of staff training annually.

The Action Alliance contracts with Project Horizon to answer the Hotline from 8pm-8am daily, on weekends, designated holidays, and meeting/training days for the Action Alliance. This contractor meets the same requirement for organizational skills, competence with technology and 40 hours of staff training annually.

More than 247 of callers who contacted the Hotline in 2014 were non-English speakers.



“Callers may not always be in crisis, but they know that every time they call they will receive the same compassionate and efficient services.”

Crisis Services Specialist

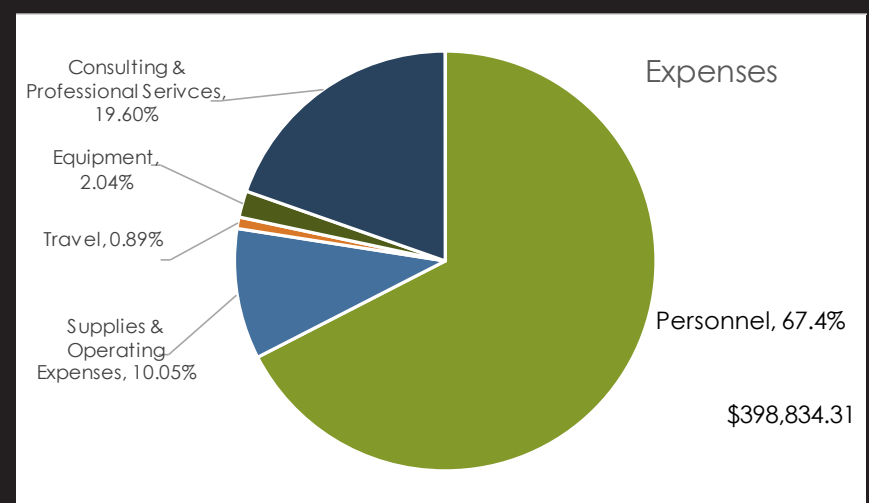
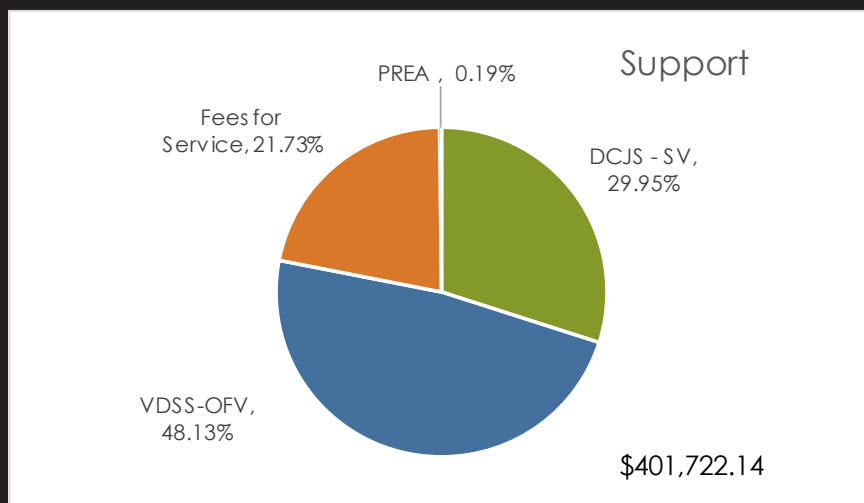
CRITICAL COVERAGE

Local Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies (SDVAs) may contract with the Action Alliance to answer their local hotlines to triage calls and provide crisis services. SDVAs must adhere to the professional standards to be eligible to contract with the Hotline and ensure the Action Alliance has up-to-date contact information for on-call staff to respond to request for face-to-face services.

There are policies and procedures in place for when either the local SDVA or the Action Alliance fails to respond or mishandles a call. The local Agency Director or the Action Alliance Hotline Manager are contacted in the event that the lack of response by either party puts a victim's safety at risk.

All crisis calls are documented in the VAdatabase and reported to the local SDVA. The local agencies have 24/7 access to the website to check for messages regarding nonemergency calls.

SUPPORT AND EXPENSES



"I DESERVE" CAMPAIGN



I deserve:
to be heard.

That's why I called.

Family Violence & Sexual Assault Virginia Hotline
1.800.838.8238

free, confidential, 24 hours a day
Text: 804.793.9999 | Chat: vsdvalliance.org

#ideserve

family violence & sexual assault
VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Community



I deserve:
respect.

That's why I called.

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#ideserve

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family violence & sexual assault
VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Community



I deserve:
Safety.

That's why I called.

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#ideserve

family violence & sexual assault
VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Community



I deserve:
support.

That's why I called.

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family violence & sexual assault
VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Community

In Virginia, African-Americans are at higher risk than members of other racial or ethnic groups for being killed in a family or intimate partner homicide event. The #ideserve campaign is designed to reach young, African-American women, ages 18-24, and to encourage women who are experiencing violence to contact the Hotline for help.

LGBTQ HELPLINE CAMPAIGN



"My partner insists that we bareback. I'd rather be safe and use condoms, but I don't want to lose him."

You deserve respect, not pressure.
866.356.6998
#CallTheHelpline | text: (804) 793-9999 | chat: www.vsdvalliance.org

LGBTQ partner abuse & sexual assault HELPLINE
1.866.356.6998
Monday-Friday 8am-8pm

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VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Community



"We broke up months ago and they won't leave me alone."

You deserve respect, not harassment.
866.356.6998
#CallTheHelpline | text: (804) 793-9999 | chat: www.vsdvalliance.org

LGBTQ partner abuse & sexual assault HELPLINE
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VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Community



"Most of the time he uses my preferred pronoun. But when he is angry he messes it up. It feels like an attack."

You deserve respect, not a put down.
866.356.6998
#CallTheHelpline | text: (804) 793-9999 | chat: www.vsdvalliance.org

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VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Community



"She knows I'm not out at my job. Whenever we get in a fight, she threatens to out me."

You deserve respect, not threats.
866.356.6998
#CallTheHelpline | text: (804) 793-9999 | chat: www.vsdvalliance.org

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VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Community

Survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ) may experience additional barriers to accessing safety. The LGBTQ Partner Abuse & Sexual Assault Helpline was launched in 2014 to provide culturally competent support services to this underserved population. The "I Deserve" and LGBTQ Helpline Campaigns were created and launched in 2014 with additional support from the Virginia Anti-Violence Project and the Virginia Department of Health.



1.800.838.8238 V/TTY
Free. Confidential. 24 hours a day.

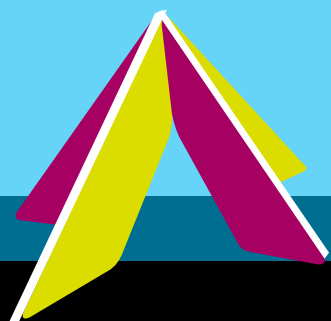
Chat: www.vadata.org/chat
Monday-Friday 8am-8pm

Text: (804) 793-9999
Monday-Friday 8am-8pm



“The hotline kept me
alive! I’m farther along
than I’ve ever been.”

Hotline caller



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTION ALLIANCE

Virginia’s leading voice on sexual and domestic violence.

5008 Monument Avenue, Suite A Richmond, VA 23230
www.vsdvalliance.org | info@vsdvalliance.org | 804.377.0335