



This document is intended to accompany the resource *NEW 2020 VIRGINIA LAW: A legal guide for sexual & domestic violence advocates and survivors in Virginia*. The following is a brief summary of those 2020 policy measures impacting the sexual and domestic violence field and those that promote the world that the Action Alliance and our member-agencies are committed to building. Please note that for legislative code changes expected to go into effect July 1st, 2020, you can refer to full [NEW 2020 VIRGINIA LAW](#) resource.

## **INVESTING IN SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

The prioritization of prevention alongside intervention was a huge focus of our legislative efforts this session. The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Prevention Fund was created to develop, support, and evaluate programs that prevent sexual and domestic violence. \$1.5M was initially allocated over the biennium to support this fund, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the legislature's final budget did not include funding for this item. A 2-page document from the Action Alliance on this bill can be found [here](#).

## **EXPANDING ACCESS TO FNE'S & TRAUMA-INFORMED MEDICAL SERVICES**

Two bills were signed into law requiring hospitals to provide treatment or transfer services to survivors of sexual assault pursuant to a plan approved by the Department of Health. Additionally, these bills established specific requirements for providers of services to pediatric survivors of sexual assault, and the Task Force on Services for Survivors of Sexual Assault to facilitate the development of services for survivors of sexual assault. Both bills had fiscal impact notes and due to re-appropriations in response to COVID-19, and neither were funded adequately.



## **FIREARMS CERTIFICATIONS FOR FINAL PO'S**

Recognizing the link between guns and intimate partner homicide, new laws were passed this session prohibiting people subject to permanent protective orders from knowingly possessing a firearm while the order is in effect. This new legislation also established a uniform court process for respondent certification that they do not possess or otherwise have access to firearms while the order is in effect. The final bill signed into law allows judges to use contempt of court in responding to offenders/respondents who refuse to comply with the firearms provisions set forth in their order. A 1-pager from the Action Alliance on these bills can be found [here](#).

## **PROTECTIVE ORDER BILLS**

Several laws improving and expanding the use of protective orders were passed. One bill allowed for judges to extend PO's for up to the lifetime of the defendant upon criminal sentencing. Another allowed for PO violations to be prosecuted in the jurisdiction where the violation occurs. New legislation also allows for a dissolution order to be issued on an ex parte basis, with or without a hearing, when the petitioner motions to dissolve a protective order.

## **RATIFYING THE ERA**

SJ1 and HJ1, carried by Senator McClellan and Delegate Carroll-Foy, passed both houses and was signed into law by Governor Northam, making Virginia the 38th state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment.

## **EXPANDING ABUSE AND DV DEFINITIONS IN CHILD CUSTODY DETERMINATIONS**

New legislation was passed stating that any history of child abuse and acts of violence, force, or threat that occurred no earlier than 10 years prior to the filing of a petition for custody or visitation of a child shall be considered by a court in determining the best interests of a child.

## **CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT**

HB 913 provides immunity for victims who come forward to report an assault that occurred while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.



## STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT

The statute of limitations was increased for prosecuting misdemeanor violations where the victim is a minor from one year after the victim reaches the age of majority to five years after the victim reaches the age of majority if the offender was an adult at the time of the offense and more than three years older than the victim.

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## LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY 2020



Caption: A photo of advocates and Action Alliance staff at the General Assembly

Each year, advocates from around the state gather in Richmond, VA to advocate for survivor rights and policies that support healthy and thriving communities. We understand just how important each voice is, and we invite you to join us in person or to advocate virtually by email, phone, and social media as we educate legislators on the issues that matter most to survivors and advocates statewide!

### WANT TO JOIN US?

Email [policy@vsdvalliance.org](mailto:policy@vsdvalliance.org) to stay updated on our latest policy activities and to get involved.

