



VIRTUAL ADVOCATE'S TOOLKIT

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY 2021



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTIONALLIANCE

WELCOME

Thank you for your joining us on January 27th for Virtual Legislative Advocacy Day (#VLAD21)! We're excited you have committed to #AmplifySurvivorVoices and advocate for policies that both empower survivors and build a world rooted in justice and compassion.

Legislative advocacy means communicating directly with your elected representatives--in this case, legislators in the Virginia General Assembly (GA)--to educate legislators about issues that impact yourself, your family, and your communities.

Traditionally, legislative advocacy has meant speaking in person with lawmakers and their staff. However, this year we are not able to do so, and that's where virtual legislative advocacy comes in.

Virtual legislative advocacy consists of any engagement with representatives in the GA through the use of technology: phone calls, email, social media, and even good-old-fashioned letter writing. This toolkit is designed to help make engaging your legislators over social media, email, and telephone as easy as possible.

Here you will find the following tools:

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS: We've pulled together a number of sample Facebook and Twitter posts for you to share. All you need to do is copy and paste... and remember to use #AmplifySurvivorVoices and #VLAD21

SHAREABLE GRAPHICS: Spread the word about #VLAD21 and what you're doing to #AmplifySurvivorVoices by sharing these images on social media, your website, and/or emails.

PHONE ADVOCACY TIPS AND EMAIL SCRIPTS: Worried about stumbling over your words or missing a talking point? We got you! If you'd rather email, simply copy and paste, or use these scripts as a jumping-off point for your own message.

CONTACT INFO FOR YOUR LEGISLATORS: Find names and addresses for all of your legislators, simply by entering your own address. We've also done the work of compiling all Facebook and Twitter handles for your Virginia Senators and members of the House of Delegates!

FIRST TIME THINKING ABOUT LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY? YOU MAY BE WONDERING...

1 WHY IS LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY IMPORTANT?

Lawmakers cannot be experts on all issues all the time. Do you know who are the experts on sexual and intimate partner violence? People who have been directly affected by sexual and intimate partner violence... and the professionals who help them! It's our job to make sure that lawmakers who vote on issues affecting survivors are knowledgeable about the issues before they vote.

2 IS LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY A GOOD USE OF MY TIME?

Yes! Because legislative advocacy works!

Lawmakers listen to their constituents. Pretty much every contact you have with a legislator and/or their staff is noted in order to keep track of where constituents stand on any given issue. Lawmakers want to be accountable to their constituents... and it's also in their best interests to do so. Plus, your voice/knowledge/point of view is worth sharing!

3 WHY AM I THE BEST PERSON TO CONTACT MY REPRESENTATIVES?

Because it takes all of us working together to build the world we want. You have a story to tell about how sexual and intimate partner has impacted you personally and/or professionally. You have your own vision of a world without domination. Never underestimate the power of story to influence lawmakers... whether it's about your own experience or the impact your program has on your community.

QUICK LINKS

- [Action Alliance 2021 Legislative Priorities and Talking Points](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Restoring Crucial Investments in Prevention](#)
- [Action Alliance Legislative Advocacy Guide](#)
- [Who's My Legislator?](#)
- [Virginia House of Delegates: Facebook and Twitter Contacts](#)
- [Virginia Senate: Facebook and Twitter Contacts](#)

SAMPLE POSTS

Here are a few sample posts to help get your message out there!

(tip: always remember to tag your representatives so they will see your post)



I stand with advocates and survivors of sexual and domestic violence in promoting safe, inclusive, and thriving communities across the Commonwealth!

- Join me in supporting policies like SB1165 and HB2263 to abolish the death penalty;
- Support legislation like HB1868, HB1944, HB2133, and HB2234 to address healing and justice for victims of human trafficking;
- And ask legislators to invest in robust efforts to prevent sexual and domestic violence in Virginia.

#AmplifySurvivorVoices #VLAD21 #ActionAlliance
#FundPrevention



The existence of the death penalty for any crime perpetuates the use of violence to exert control over individuals and groups and it creates a society that tolerates abuse. The death penalty is also disproportionately and unjustly applied to survivors, people of color, low-income people, and people with serious mental health needs. It's time for Virginia to eliminate this cruel practice – Pass SB 1165 (Surovell) and HB 2263 (Mullin) NOW!

#AmplifySurvivorVoices #VLAD21 #ActionAlliance

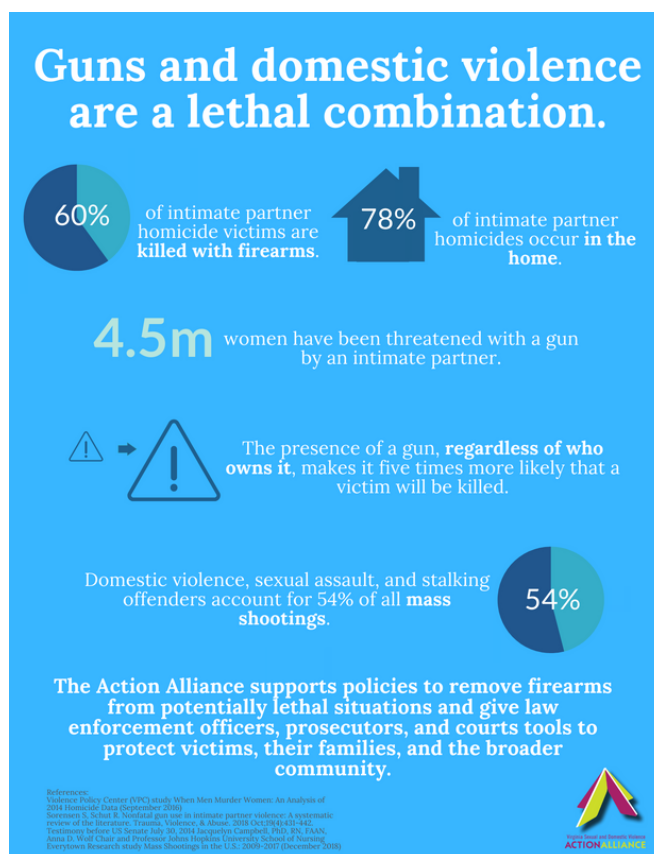
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Advocates and survivors of sexual and domestic violence agree: guns and domestic violence are a lethal combination! To curb the high rates of intimate partner homicide in VA, we need to enact measures that remove firearms from dangerous situations and advance policies that give law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts additional tools to protect victims, their families, and the larger community from harm. #AmplifySurvivorVoices #VLAD21 #ActionAlliance #DisarmDV



SAMPLE POSTS

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Currently, the Commonwealth invests \$0 toward the important goal of preventing sexual and domestic violence through primary prevention efforts. Now, more than ever, funding for sexual and domestic violence prevention work is urgently needed to counteract the effects of the pandemic and to undo family and community risk factors for violence. That is why we're urging legislators to support budget items 301 #2s (Favola) and 301 #3h (Herring), restoring crucial funds to the VA Sexual & Domestic Violence Prevention Fund. #AmplifySurvivorVoices #VLAD21 #ActionAlliance #FundPrevention

PREVENTION PROGRAMS STOP VIOLENCE BEFORE IT HAPPENS

Prevention staff in Virginia's Sexual & Domestic Violence Agencies (SDVAs) use evidence-informed, public health strategies to prevent violence like...

TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE

Ongoing school-based and after-school education teaching young people the skills required to build healthy relationships and become community leaders;

SUPPORTING HEALTHY FAMILIES

Education for parents and adults on how to support developmentally appropriate communication and expression in youth, teach consent, model respect, and build social-emotional learning skills

TRAINING AND TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

Building road-maps with school administrators and faith and community leaders on ways to create healthy, violence-free environments - including recognizing and responding to harmful behaviors that may be risk factors for future violence

BUILDING COMMUNITY COALITIONS AND CONNECTION

Leading multi-disciplinary community coalitions to address the root causes of violence and make neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, and businesses healthy and safe

Prevention programs like these, led by Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies, are the cornerstones for ensuring community-wide health and resilience—a key factor in preventing future violence.

WWW.VSDVALLIANCE.ORG

SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS ON THE RISE

In Virginia, we have seen the requests for sexual and domestic violence services drastically increase as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Stay-at-home orders and closures designed to protect the public from widespread infection left many survivors and families isolated or trapped at home with their abusers.

150%

Requests for emergency shelter has increased dramatically, with one agency reporting a 150% increase in the number of families and survivors living in their shelter as compared to the previous year.

87%

87% of SDVAs reported significant shifts in work to address the complex and ongoing housing, financial, and safety needs during the pandemic.

73%

Beginning in March, Virginia's Statewide Hotline saw a 73% increase in contacts.

23%

As virtual classes began in the Fall, Virginia hotlines received 23% more requests for services from survivors who are under the age of 24.

Upward trends in overall hotline contacts have turned into significant increases in the number of survivors receiving face-to-face crisis intervention, advocacy, and counseling services; in some communities, these increases reflect literally thousands more being served in 2020 in comparison to 2019.

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IT'S TIME TO FUND PREVENTION

Imagine, a Virginia where every community can engage in evidence-informed work to...

Teach young people how to have healthy relationships, foster positive norms, and build empathy and communication skills

Connect community leaders and young people with tools and resources, problem solving spaces, and safety and support networks

Strengthen economic supports for families

Educate parents and adults on how to teach consent, model respect, and support healthy youth development

Build conditions to make neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, and communities healthy and safe

Virginia currently invests \$0 toward preventing sexual and domestic violence. And with limited federal funds, only 16 of our 65 sexual and domestic violence agencies (SDVAs) can engage in this life-saving work.

With just **\$750K** in annual state funds, we can double Virginia's prevention impact

31% of SDVAs could expand their current work to reach more people in their community

19% of SDVAs could replace a limited or short-term funding source to sustain long-term prevention work in their community

50% of SDVAs could establish a first ever prevention program in their community

Now, more than ever, funding for sexual and domestic violence prevention work is urgently needed to reduce family and community risk factors for violence and to ensure the future safety and wellbeing of all Virginians.

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SAMPLE POSTS

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(tip: always remember to tag your representatives so they will see your post)

@_____ (Senator/Delegate Twitter handle) support me in promoting victim safety and preventing intimate partner homicide in VA! Help us pass HB 1992 and SB1382 now #VLAD21 #ActionAlliance #DisarmDV

@_____ (Senator/Delegate Twitter handle) support survivors of sexual and domestic violence in VA by eliminating barriers to healthcare and justice! Vote YES on SB1276, HB1922, and HB1867 #AmplifySurvivorVoices #VLAD21 #ActionAlliance

@_____ (Senator/Delegate Twitter handle) everyone should have the right to safe, respectful, and violence-free relationships and homes. Join me in supporting bills like HJ582, HB2132, and SB1121 to advance equality and respect for LGBTQ Virginians! #AmplifySurvivorVoices #VLAD21 #ActionAlliance #FundPrevention

GRAPHICS

Share these graphics with your Facebook and Instagram posts to easily
#AmplifySurvivorVoices.

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Build coalitions to make neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, and communities healthy and safe

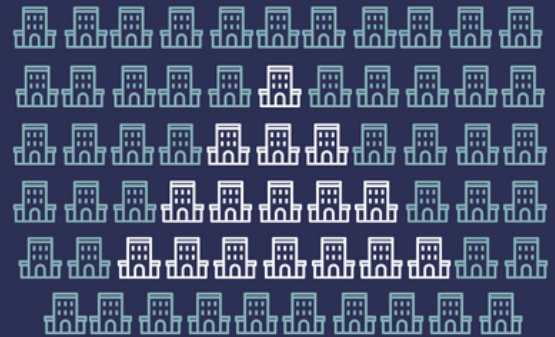


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DID YOU KNOW?

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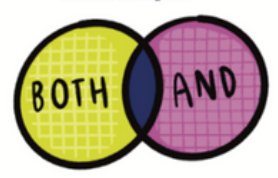
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WWW.VSDVALLIANCE.ORG

INFOGRAPHICS

Share these infographics when you post to help share knowledge about how prevention can end violence before it starts.



With just
\$750K

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Now, more than ever, funding for sexual and domestic violence prevention work is urgently needed to reduce family and community risk factors for violence and to ensure the future safety and wellbeing of all Virginians.

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Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence ACTION ALLIANCE

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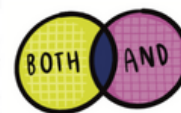


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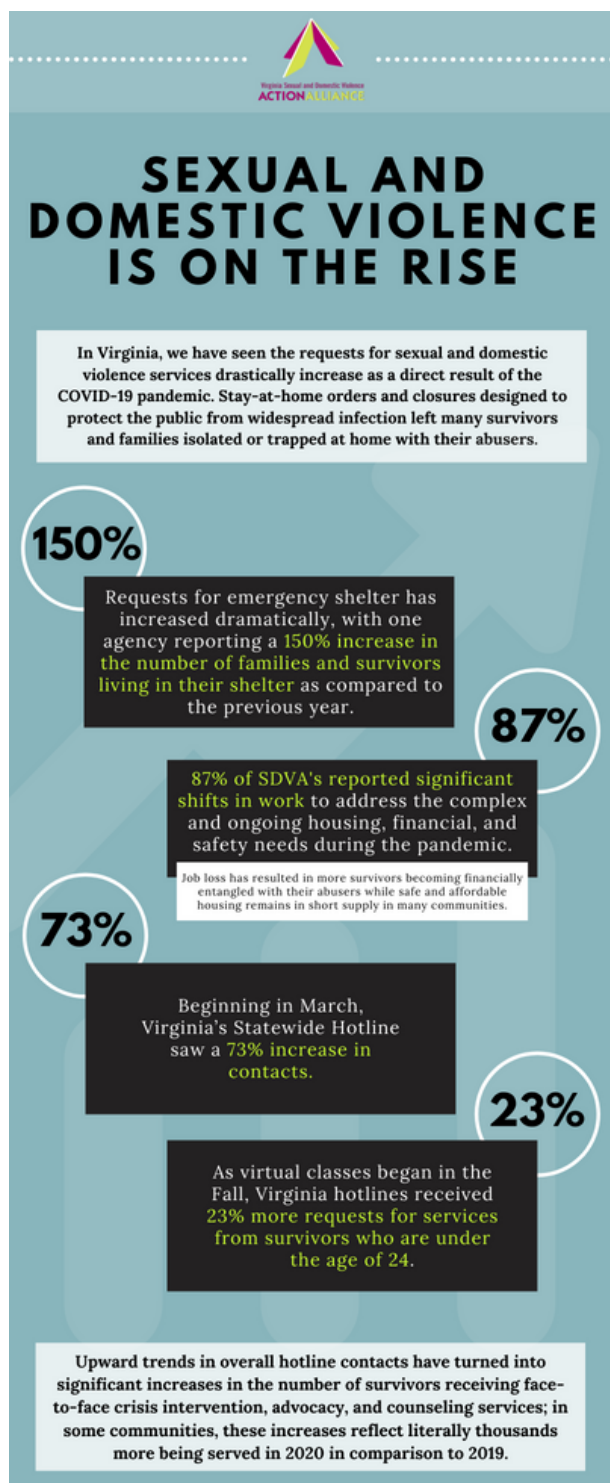


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Click here to download all of the images included in this toolkit.



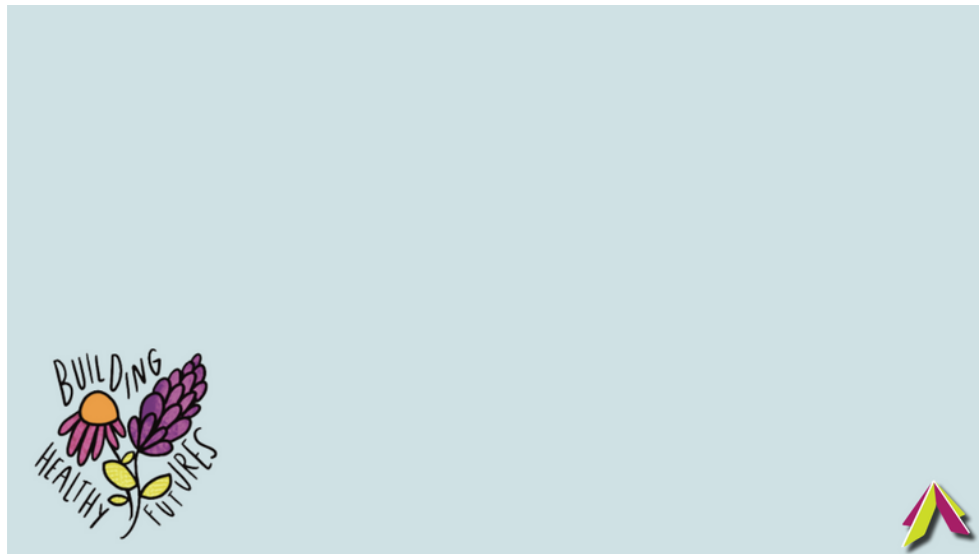
VISUAL ELEMENTS

Use these elements to create your own graphics stickers, or buttons and stand in solidarity with all survivors.,



ZOOM BACKGROUNDS

Make a statement in your Zoom meetings using these social media banners and Zoom backgrounds.



SAMPLE SCRIPTS

Use these scripts as copy-and-paste templates or to help guide you as you send emails to your representatives.



#FUNDPREVENTION – RESTORE CRUCIAL INVESTMENTS IN PREVENTION

Subject: Sexual & Domestic Violence is on the rise – help us stop it!

Dear Delegate/Senator _____:

I'm _____ (name), _____ (position/title) at _____ (sexual and/or domestic violence agency), a community based program serving _____ (town/city/county/) and working every day to end sexual and domestic violence. I'm emailing you today to urge you to support budget items 301 #2s (Favola) and 301 #3h (Herring), which would restore life-saving appropriations to Virginia's sexual and domestic violence prevention fund.

Unfortunately, many of Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies have seen requests for services, including emergency shelter, drastically increase as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Stay-at-home orders and closures designed to protect the public from widespread infection have left many survivors and families isolated or trapped at home with their abusers. The increased demand for services reflects literally thousands more being served in 2020 in comparison to 2019. But we can reverse these upward trends across the state with your help. Please support crucial reallocations to the prevention fund, budget items 301 #2s (Favola) and 301 #3h (Herring), this session. For more information on this ask and how you can support our cause in _____ (town/city/county), please see the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance's [prevention factsheet](#)!

Thank you for your time and commitment to building safe and thriving families and communities in Virginia! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or our partners at the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

Thank you!

_____ (Name, title, agency, contact info)

SAMPLE SCRIPTS

Use these scripts as copy-and-paste templates or to help guide you as you send emails to your representatives.



INCREASE VICTIM SAFETY BY REDUCING OFFENDER ACCESS TO FIREARMS

Subject: Reduce Offender Access to Firearms: Support HB 1992

Dear Delegate/Senator _____:

I'm _____ (name), _____ (position/title) at _____ (sexual and/or domestic violence agency), a community based program serving _____ (town/city/county/) and working every day to end sexual and domestic violence. I'm emailing you today to urge you to support [HB 1992](#) (Murphy) which would increase victim safety by reducing offender access to firearms in Virginia.

Unfortunately, intimate partner (IPV) homicide occurs at extraordinary rates in Virginia. And overwhelmingly, firearms are how abusers escalate and enact lethal force on victims and their families. The data tells us that for those cases where violence in the home has become so volatile that it leads to death, there were often high-risk perpetration behaviors, like assault and battery, that preceded the event. We also know that the presence of a firearm in the hands of an offender means that the likelihood of IPV homicide is five times greater than it otherwise would be. We also know that offenders of sexual and domestic violence account for 54% of all mass shooting events in the U.S. meaning that these policies are not just an issue of individual and family safety, but community safety as well. The research is very clear that expanding firearm prohibitions to include domestic and sexual violence crimes has tangible results in terms of reducing intimate partner homicide and community violence.

I am asking that you support HB 1992 (Murphy) this session. Please see the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance's [Guns and Domestic Violence fact sheet](#) for more information on this crucial issue!

Thank you for your time and your commitment to safety and justice in Virginia! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or our partners at the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

Thank you!

_____ (Name, title, agency, contact info)

SAMPLE SCRIPTS

Use these scripts as copy-and-paste templates or to help guide you as you send emails to your representatives.



PROMOTE HEALTHCARE ACCESS FOR SURVIVORS

Subject: Support Healthcare Access for Victims of Sexual Violence: Pass HB 1922 & HB 1867

Dear Delegate/Senator _____:

I'm _____ (name), _____ (position/title) at _____ (sexual and/or domestic violence agency), a community based program serving _____ (town/city/county/) and working every day to end sexual and domestic violence. I'm emailing you today to urge you to support HB 1922 (Price) and HB 1867 (Delaney) promoting access to essential healthcare services and financial compensation for victims of sexual and domestic violence in Virginia.

All too often, victims of sexual and domestic violence have the burden of addressing the possibility of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy and/or infertility, and other sexual and reproductive health issues. Access to sexual and reproductive health care is critical to recovering from the trauma of sexual and domestic violence—and that access must include options for all people regardless of income, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, or age. A victim of sexual violence who is pregnant must be able to make decisions about whether to end a pregnancy, choose adoption, or raise a child. As part of that process, they should have access to non-judgmental, safe, legal, affordable, and medically accurate information and care, without pressure or added burdens. This is why I'm in support of [HB 1922](#) (Price) and [HB 1867](#) (Delaney) and I'm asking for your support as well.

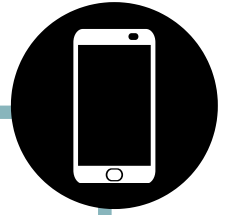
Thank you for your time and your commitment to safety and justice in Virginia! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or our partners at the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

Thank you!

_____ (Name, title, agency, contact info)

PHONE ADVOCACY

The tips below can help you navigate phone-based advocacy during Legislative Advocacy Day. If you need any support, our staff will be available, simply email policy@vsdvalliance.org



The same webpage which helps you identify your representatives also provides their phone numbers. Once you know which representatives are yours, a simple Google search should pull up their personal websites, which should also have office addresses and phone numbers.

- 1)** Remember your message prep! For phone calls, it can be helpful to write out some talking points ahead of time to make sure you know what you want to say. Calls to the front desk are often brief, but they do take note of them.
- 2)** Use the following email scripts as a launching pad to get you started on talking points.
- 3)** When you call your representative's office, the phone will be answered by a staff member (staffer). Tell the staffer you are a constituent and you'd like to speak to someone about sexual/ domestic violence issues. This information will help direct you to the most appropriate person.

EMAIL HEADERS



GETTING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES



Find your representatives.

Find your Virginia Senators on Twitter
and Facebook.



Find your Virginia Delegates on Twitter
and Facebook.

FOLLOW US



@VActionAlliance



@VSDVAA

VIRTUAL ADVOCATE'S TOOLKIT



VIRGINIA SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION ALLIANCE

VIRGINIA'S LEADING VOICE ON SEXUAL AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE.

1118 WEST MAIN STREET
RICHMOND, VA 23220

WWW.VSDVALLIANCE.ORG | POLICY@VSDVALLIANCE.ORG | 804.377.0335

[TWITTER: @VACTIONALLIANCE](https://twitter.com/VACTIONALLIANCE)

[FACEBOOK: VACTIONALLIANCE](https://facebook.com/VACTIONALLIANCE)

#VLAD21