



ADVOCACY IN VIRGINIA

2023



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTIONALLIANCE

A REPORT ON DATA FROM
VIRGINIA'S SEXUAL AND
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGENCIES

Prepared:

**Summer/Fall
2024**



ABOUT THIS REPORT

In these pages, you will see the hopeful work being done by preventionists and advocates around the Commonwealth of Virginia, as well as the devastating economic impact that sexual and domestic violence continues to exert upon survivors, their families, and the communities in which they live. Our nation's affordable housing crisis lands heavily on the backs of survivors of violence, keeping them from obtaining safe and stable housing.

In the face of these challenges, survivor advocates and preventionists continue to work hard daily to respond to the impacts of violence on their community members. They strive daily to help individuals and communities understand the ways to uproot the core drivers of violence so that we may have a future in which we **ALL** thrive.





OVERVIEW OF SERVICES

This report reflects the work of **67** sexual and domestic violence agencies (SDVAs) using VAdata, Virginia's primary electronic data system for collecting information on sexual and domestic violence services, to track a substantial portion of the services provided between January 1 and December 31, 2023 (unless otherwise noted). These service providers consisted of:

- 3** sexual assault crisis centers,
- 14** domestic violence programs,
- 49** dual sexual and domestic violence agencies,
- and the Virginia Statewide Hotline.

Services provided by Virginia's Sexual and Domestic Violence agencies includes:

HOTLINES (including text and chat) are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and include multilingual and accessible support and services. Advocates spent **40,080** hours responding to **72,831** hotline contacts* by phone, text, chat, and email.

ADVOCACY refers to counseling, support, and accompaniment services provided by advocates as desired by survivors. This can include safety planning and emotional support; hospital accompaniment; clinical counseling; support groups; assistance with civil and criminal legal processes; childcare; help accessing other community resources; transportation, and more. Agencies provided **268,673** hours of advocacy services to **28,814** adults and children*.

EMERGENCY SHELTER/HOUSING offers safety and stability to survivors fleeing violence. While survivors are in shelter, they often work with advocates to secure self-supported housing and meet other basic needs. Agencies provided emergency housing to **5,700** adults and children*.

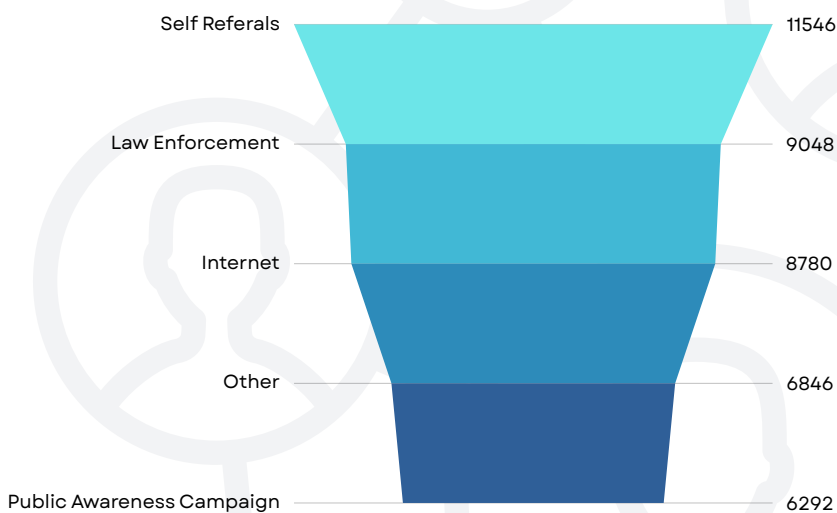
* data from the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) shows that their advocates provided support services to Virginia survivors **6,573** times via chat, phone, and text. VAdata reports indicate that **38,560** of contacts to Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies' hotlines were directly from victims. All additional data was pulled from VAdata via the Hotline Data Report - CY2023. VAdata. Retrieved June 15, 2024, from <https://vadata.org>



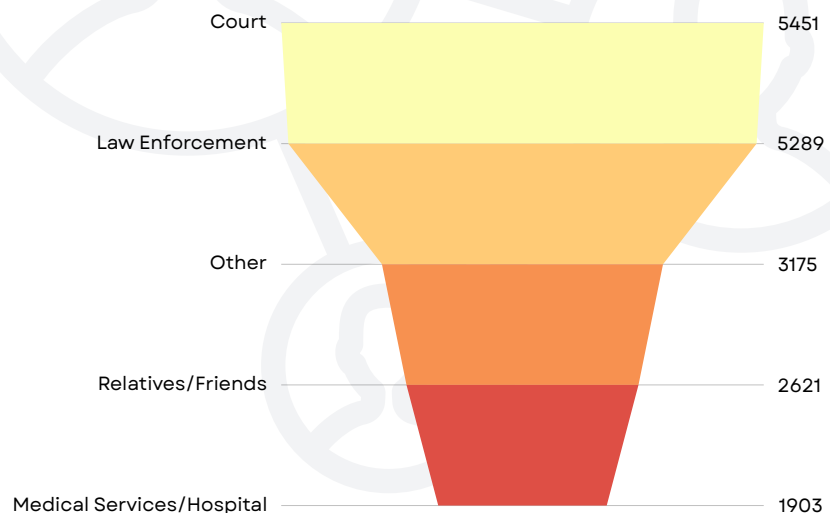
HOW SURVIVORS ACCESS SERVICES

VAdata collects information on how individuals learned of hotline and advocacy services. This can be helpful for understanding how sexual and domestic violence agencies are connected within the communities they serve. High referral rates from specific sources may reflect the strength of collaboration among local partners and community awareness of agency resources.

Top 5 Referral Sources for Hotline Contacts



Top 5 Referral Sources for Advocacy Services

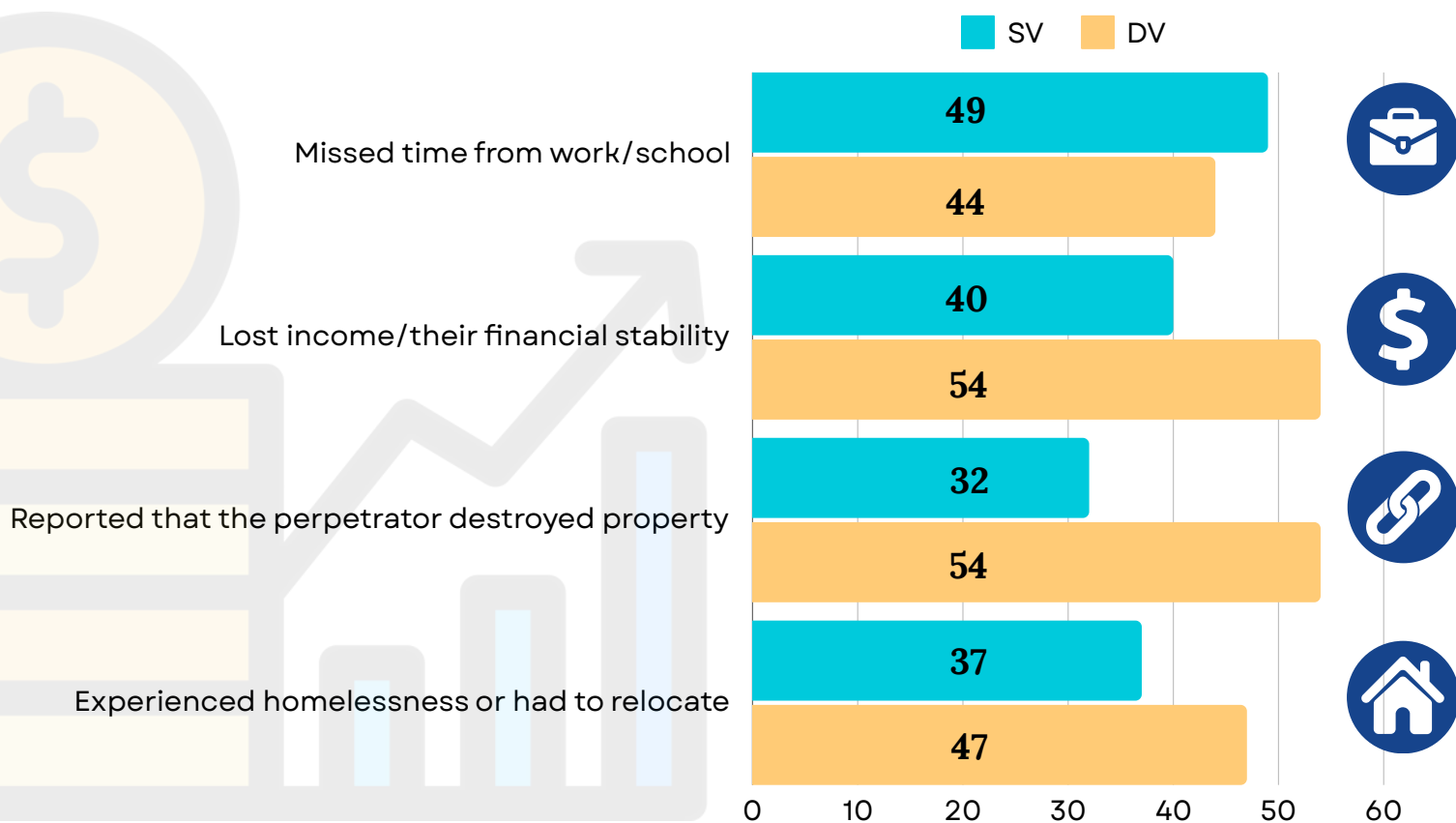




ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE

Due to their experiences of violence, the following chart shows some ways in which survivors were financially impacted.

Out of every 100 survivors...



Values calculated from the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (2024, April 29). Advocacy Data Report with victim only data - CY2023. VAdata. Retrieved August 2024, from <https://vadata.org>. Values reported include only those who responded either "yes" or "no" to each measure.



SURVIVORS AND HOUSING

Survivors of violence continue to comprise the largest adult sub-population of people served by Virginia's homelessness services agencies (**nearly 1/5 of all people who sought housing services in 2023**).¹ Many of Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies are the only resource in their area for providing emergency housing to survivors fleeing violence, and some offer transitional housing beyond emergency shelter.

Agencies across Virginia use a mix of hotels and agency-operated residential shelter spaces to house survivors.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

In 2023, Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies provided **230,759** nights of emergency shelter for **5,705** survivors.² This includes **104,866** nights of emergency shelter for children.

Agencies were **forced to turn away survivors seeking emergency shelter 593 times** because no shelter beds were available.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

In addition to emergency shelter, sexual and domestic violence programs in Virginia **provided 99,020** nights of transitional housing to **185** adults and **159** children.

Only **1/3 (32%)** of survivors and their families who exited sexual and domestic violence agencies had plans to enter safe and stable (self-supported or transitional) housing. **34%** planned to exit to unstable housing, **7%** planned to return home where an abusive partner was present, and **27%** of families' statuses was unknown at their time of exit.

"If the shelter did not exist, I know my children and I'd still be moving hotel to hotel and out of my vehicles or at random places. We are a lot safer thanks to the [shelter]."



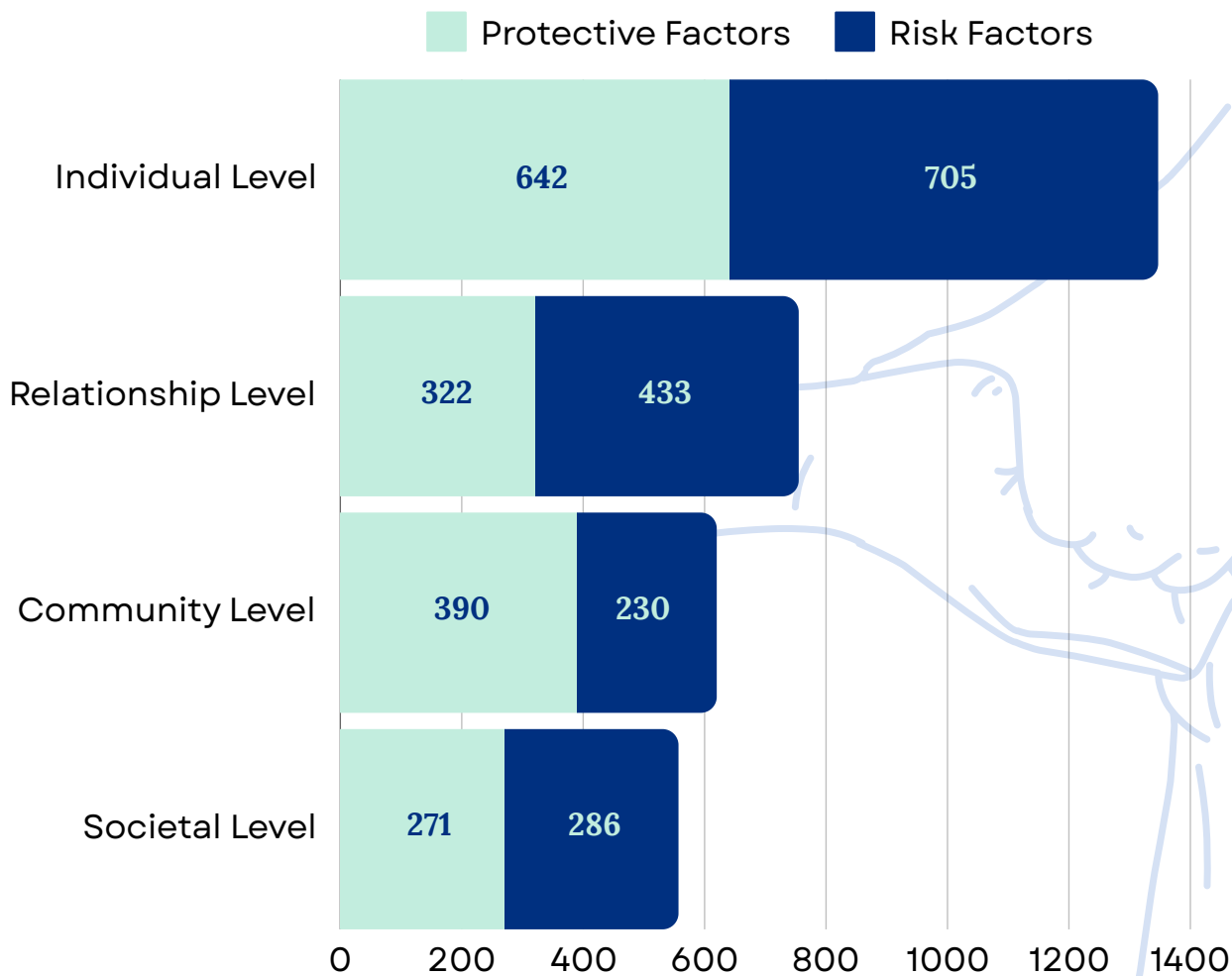
¹ Data derived from the Virginia's Homeless Programs 2022-2023 Program Year report, found at <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2023/RD728/PDF>

² Data derived from Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (2024, April 29). Domestic Violence Services Data Report - CY2023. VAdata. Retrieved June 15, 2024, from <https://vadata.org>



PREVENTION STRATEGIES

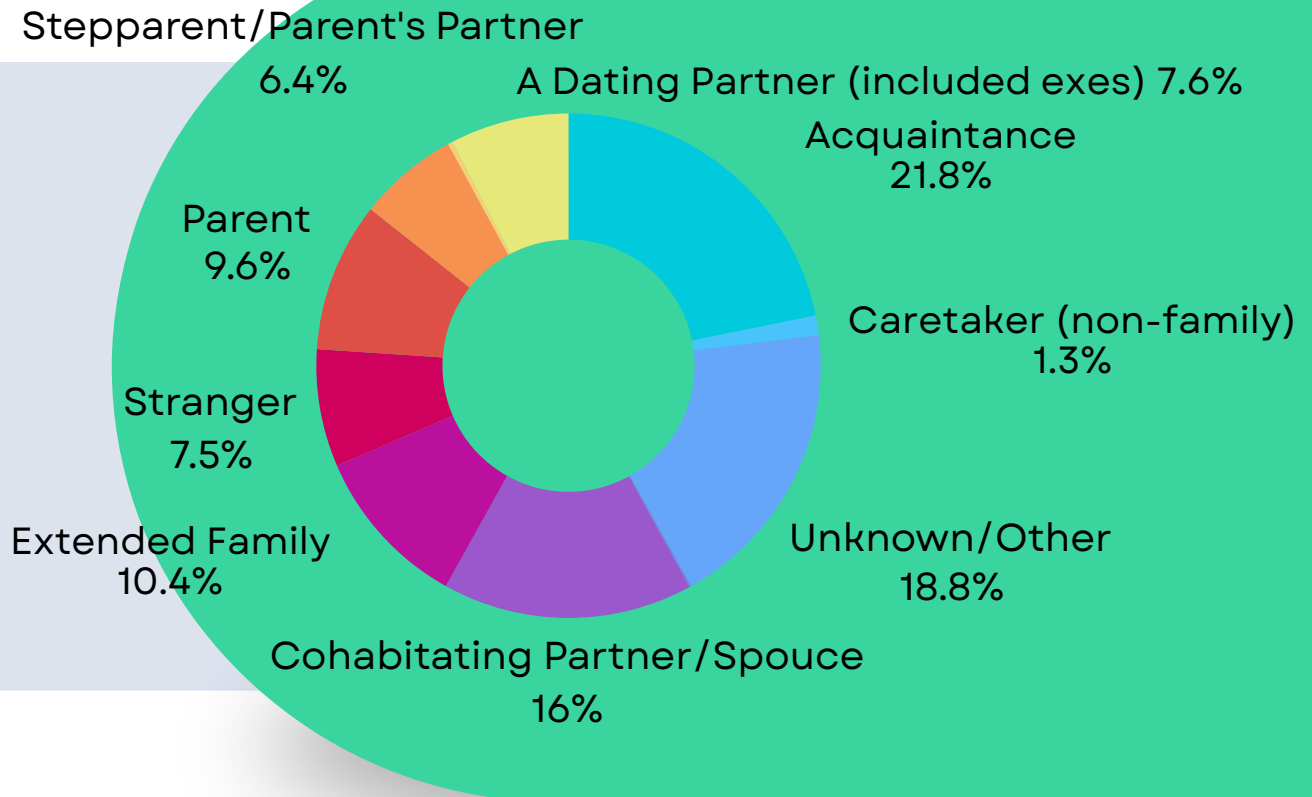
Preventing sexual and domestic violence (SDV) starts with disrupting the attitudes, behaviors, and conditions that could make someone more likely to perpetrate or be victimized by SDV (risk factors) and cultivating the attitudes, behaviors, and conditions that could make someone less likely to perpetrate or be victimized by SDV (protective factors). In 2023, preventionists across the state worked to implement **1,654 strategies** that addressed risk factors and **1,625 strategies** that address protective factors.



**as reported by Virginia SDVA advocates via VAdata Advocacy forms.*



DISPELLING THE MYTH OF “STRANGER DANGER”



There is a notion that acts of sexual violence are most often committed by strangers. Of those who received services related to a sexual violence experience, nearly **75% of survivors knew the person who assaulted them**. This included acquaintances, caretakers, partners/spouses and dating partners, extended family, parents and step-parents, and other household members. In nearly **50%** of cases, the violence occurred in the victims' own homes.* For those who were incarcerated, violence was perpetrated by both correctional staff as well as other incarcerated people.

*as reported by Virginia SDVA advocates via VAdData Advocacy forms.



SURVIVORS TELL US

that without Virginia's agencies and the aid of advocates...



"I would be stuck in the loop over and over again being yelled at and walking on a egg shell everyday by my stepdad. I don't want that for me and my family."

"Estaría sin apoyo y sin techo donde dormir y sin esperanza (I wouldn't have had any support, a place to stay, or any hope)."

"I honestly don't know what I would've done. I probably wouldn't have left. I felt safe leaving that situation and if this shelter didn't exist I wouldn't have felt like I would've been able to leave."



"Si la agencia no existiera hubiera estado en la calle embarazada con mis hijos. Gracias a Dios que existe las agencia y su personal que es tan bueno (If the agency did not exist, I would have been on the street pregnant with my children. Thank God this agency exists and its staff is so good.)"



VIRGINIA'S CONTRIBUTING SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGENCIES

The following list includes the sexual and domestic violence agencies in Virginia that utilized the VAdata system in 2023:

Abuse Alternatives	Fauquier County D.S.S.	Project Horizon
A.C.T.S. of Prince William County	First Step	Response, Inc.
Alexandria Sexual and Domestic Violence Advocacy Program	Franklin County Family Resource Center	Sacred Heart Center
Avalon	Genieve Shelter	Safe Harbor
Ayuda	Goochland Cares	Safehome Systems
Bedford County D.S.S.	Hanover Safe Place	Salvation Army Turning Point
Bethany House	Haven of the Dan River Region	Samaritan House
Boat People SOS	Haven Shelter and Services	Services to Abused Families (SAFE)
Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Help and Emergency Response (HER)	Sexual Assault Resource Agency - Charlottesville
Chesterfield County Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Ctr.	Hope House of Scott County	Shelter for Help in Emergency Shelter House/Artemis House
CHOICES of Page County	Hope Program at Chesapeake Regional Hospital	Southside Survivor Response Center
Clinch Valley C.A.A.	James House	Tahirih Justice Center
Collins Center	Just Neighbors Ministry, Inc.	Total Action for Progress - Domestic Violence Services
CWS Refugee Resettlement Office - Harrisonburg	Korean Community Services Center of Greater Washington	Transitions Family Violence Services
Doorways	Laurel Center	Tri-County C.A.A.
Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence	LAWS Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services	Virginia Anti-Violence Project
Empowerhouse	Latinos In Virginia Empowerment Center	Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition
Ethiopian Community Development Council	LGBT Life Center	Virginia Statewide Hotline
Fairfax County Office for Women and Domestic and Sexual Violence Services	New Bridges Immigrant Resource Center	Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance - Project for the Empowerment of Survivors (PES)
Family Crisis Support Services	New Directions Center, Inc.	Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley
Family Resource Center, Inc.	People, Inc.	YWCA of Central Virginia - Lynchburg
Family Violence and Sexual Assault Unit	Phoenix Project	YWCA Richmond
	Project EMPOWER at VCU Health	YWCA - South Hampton Roads
	Project Hope at Thrive VA	

Support for the operation of the VAdata system as well as staff time dedicated to training and technical assistance, data analysis, and reporting is provided by a contract from the Virginia Department of Social Services Office of Family Violence (#FAM-22-105) and a grant from the Office on Violence Against Women (#15JOVW-24-GG-00901-MUMU). The opinions expressed in this report as well as decisions about data to highlight are exclusively those of the Action Alliance and do not represent the opinions of VDSS-OFV or OVW.



ABOUT VADATA

VAdata is an electronic, web-based data collection system for Virginia's sexual and domestic violence service agencies. It is the primary source of information in Virginia that describes both the experiences of survivors of sexual and domestic violence, and the services provided to them by sexual and domestic violence agencies. Since its creation in 1996, this electronic data collection system has been at the forefront of best practices in confidential, survivor-centered data collection and reporting.

Reports from the VAdata system were used to compile this resource, prepared by staff of the Action Alliance. All forms used for data collection can be accessed at https://vadata.org/p_access.html. Please contact vadataadmin@vsdvalliance.org for more information about this report and/or the VAdata system.

The Action Alliance is grateful for the support of the VAdata system from local agencies, the Data Systems Advisory Committee, and state partners and funders. The support is invaluable to the operation and continues improvement of VAdata for the benefit of survivors throughout the Commonwealth.



The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance is Virginia's leading voice on sexual and intimate partner violence. We are a non-profit coalition of survivors, Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies, and allies working to strengthen how communities across Virginia respond to and prevent sexual and intimate partner violence. As an advocacy organization, we provide the expertise needed to ensure an effective response. As a service provider, we offer people resources for making informed choices. As a membership organization, we build diverse alliances across the state. We are guided by a compelling vision for a world where all of us thrive.



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