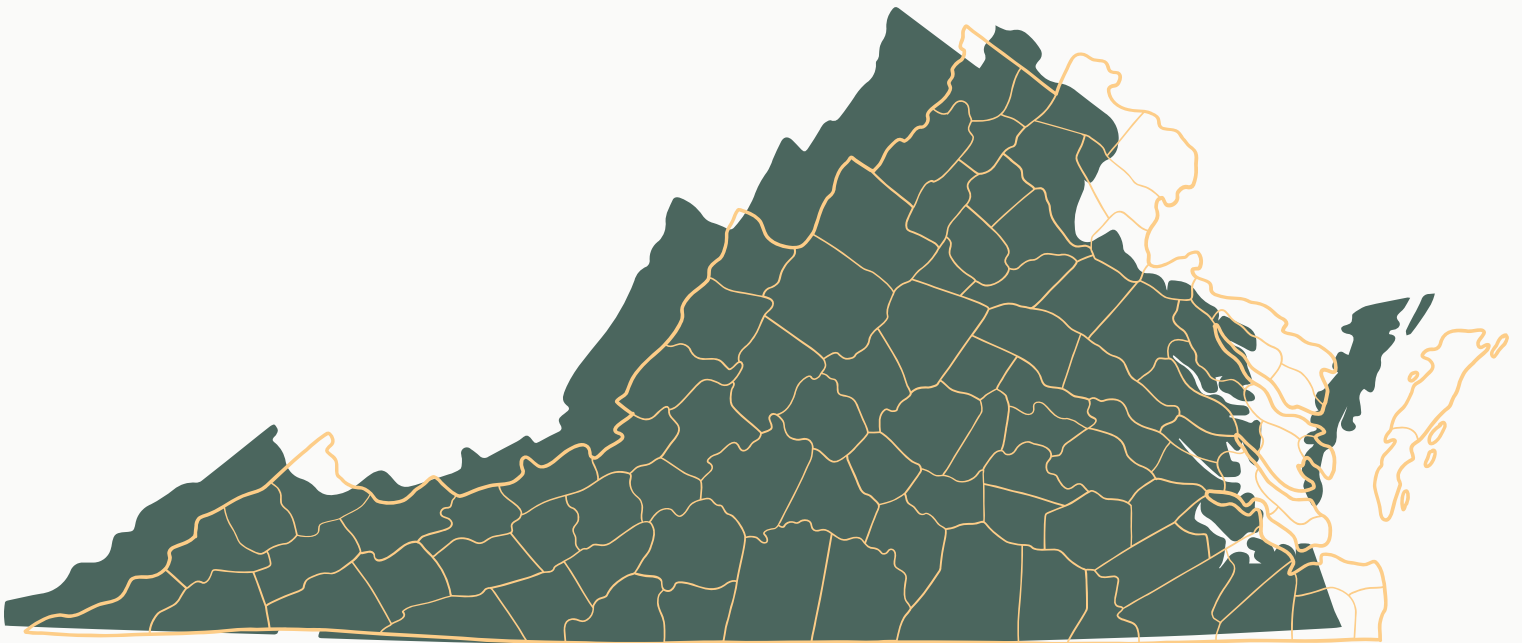


ADVOCACY IN VIRGINIA

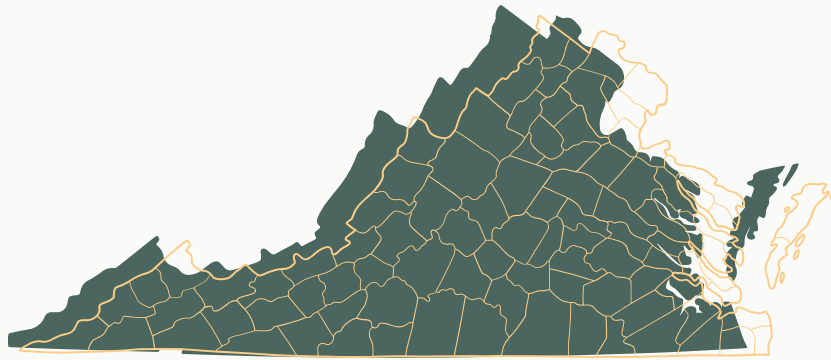
2024

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



PREPARED SUMMER 2025





ADVOCACY IN VIRGINIA

2024

ABOUT THE ACTION ALLIANCE

The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance is **Virginia's leading voice on sexual and intimate partner violence**. We are a non-profit network 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 have a compelling vision for a world where all of us thrive. Violence is all around us, but it doesn't have to be that way. A better world is within reach.

DATA SOURCE FOR THIS REPORT

Seventy sexual & domestic violence agencies across Virginia use VAdata, a secure, web-based data system that is maintained by the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance to document survivor experiences and the services the agencies provide. As the Commonwealth's primary repository of information on the experiences of survivors and the services they receive, VAdata plays a critical role in shaping our understanding of the impacts of sexual and domestic violence in Virginia. This report features information reported to VAdata by member agencies between January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2024. Data in tables was pulled from VAdata on 7/31/2025. AI tools were used, in part, for data analysis and narrative development. No data reviewed included personally or individually identifying information.



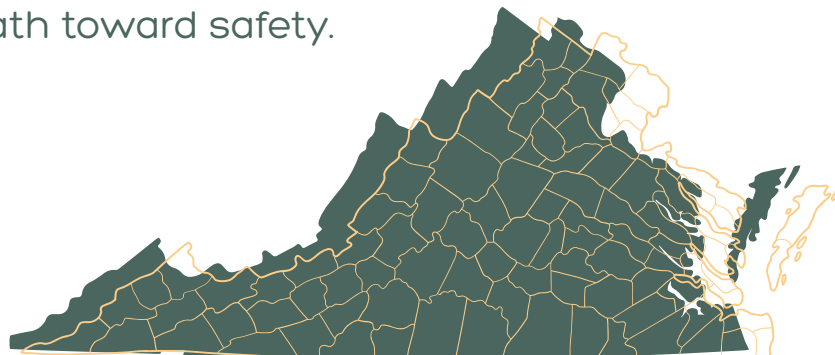
VIRGINIA SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION ALLIANCE
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INTRODUCTION

In 2024, Virginia's network of sexual and domestic violence advocates delivered more than **275,000 hours** of support to survivors, supported more than **27,700 survivors** through in-person services, answered over **68,600 hotline calls**, and provided thousands of adults and children with safe shelter and housing. These numbers reflect more than service delivery; they represent moments of safety, connection, and possibility in the midst of crisis.

Across the Commonwealth, advocates face escalating and increasingly complex challenges. Survivors are not only confronting violence but are caught in a tightening web of housing instability, deepening trauma, fractured family ties, and relentless economic hardship. The strain on the system is mounting, pushing it to its limits as it struggles to ensure every survivor can find someone to call, somewhere to go, and a path toward safety.



2024



275,600
HOURS OF ADVOCACY



27,700
PEOPLE REACHED
OUT FOR HELP



68,600
HOTLINE
CONTACTS
ANSWERED

VIRGINIA'S CRISIS RESPONSE

ANSWERING EVERY CALL

Hotlines remain a critical access point for survivors seeking help.

TOTAL HOTLINE CALLS TO VIRGINIA'S SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGENCIES BY TOPIC

YEAR	TOTAL HOTLINE CALLS	DV-RELATED*	SV-RELATED*	OTHER NEEDS
2020	70,279	40,257	10,666	34,099
2021	77,530	41,801	11,095	30,120
2022	78,964	41,698	10,545	34,833
2023	72,982	39,874	9,317	35,953
2024	68,641	39,304	9,864	36,171

*DV-RELATED: Related to domestic violence

*SV-RELATED: Related to sexual violence

Over the past five years, hotline data from Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies shows steady demand and growing complexity in survivors' needs. Calls peaked during the pandemic, rising from 70,279 in 2020 to a high of 78,964 in 2022 before declining 13% to 68,641 in 2024. This downward trend likely reflects a mix of factors: limited access to services and resources in communities, the downsizing of agencies and their staff, and other ongoing impacts to funding shifts and systemic barriers.

Yet beneath the surface, the story isn't one of reduced need, it's one of evolving and increasingly complex need. While calls related to domestic and sexual violence remained steady, calls for "other needs" including housing, legal issues, and financial assistance, rose 20% since 2021. In 2024 alone, over 36,000 callers sought this broader support, reflecting the expanding challenges survivors face and the increasing breadth of needs SDVAs are being asked to support.

ADVOCACY SERVICES

LOOKING BACK OVER 5 YEARS

In 2024, **22,000 adults and 5,703 children** received support totaling **more than 275,000 hours** of services provided by advocates. Though 2024 saw the lowest number of individuals served during this 5-year period, the total hours of service remain comparable to previous years, demonstrating continued demand for and engagement with ongoing services.

NUMBERS OF ADULTS AND CHILDREN SERVED AND HOURS OF SERVICE PROVIDED BY VIRGINIA'S SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGENCIES

YEAR	ADULTS SERVED	HOURS FOR ADULTS
2020	22,983	256,925
2021	24,150	250,235
2022	23,047	233,983
2023	23,057	230,662
2024	22,000	237,900



CHILDREN SERVED	HOURS FOR CHILDREN
6,809	46,395
6,687	48,882
7,387	48,930
6,846	41,241
5,703	37,765

IN 2024, ADVOCATES SPENT AN AVERAGE OF **11 HOURS** WITH EVERY ADULT SERVED

IN 2024, ADVOCATES SPENT AN AVERAGE OF **8 HOURS** WITH EVERY CHILD SERVED

For comparison, 2021 saw the highest number of adults served (24,150), and 2022 marked a peak in children served (7,387). Even in 2023, when adult and child service numbers were slightly higher than 2024, the total support hours were lower, suggesting that survivors in 2024 required more sustained, in-depth assistance. These trends show that, while fewer individuals may be reaching services – likely due to access barriers, resource limitations, or shifting outreach models - those who do are staying connected to those services longer and receive more comprehensive support. **The need is not going away. It has deepened.**

EMERGENCY SHELTER

SERVING THOUSANDS, TURNING HUNDREDS AWAY

From 2020 to 2024, Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies provided safe shelter to thousands of survivors annually, peaking in 2021, with nearly 3,900 adults and 2,500 children housed, totaling over 242,000 shelter nights. Although the number of individuals sheltered declined modestly over the 5-year time period, the total shelter nights remained steadily above 230,000, indicating **survivors are staying longer once they access shelter**.

NUMBERS OF ADULTS AND CHILDREN SHELTERED, TOTAL NIGHTS OF SHELTER, AND NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS DENIED SHELTER DUE TO CAPACITY BY VIRGINIA'S SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGENCIES

YEAR	ADULTS SHELTERED	CHILDREN SHELTERED	TOTAL SHELTER NIGHTS	SHELTER REQUESTS DENIED DUE TO CAPACITY
2020	3,427	2,444	222,888	491
2021	3,876	2,510	242,528	545
2022	3,722	2,580	238,833	1,215
2023	3,361	2,360	233,241	792
2024	3,237	2,312	232,601	1,083

2020-2024

120%



Despite programs' best efforts to meet demand, **unmet shelter requests rose by 120% from 2020-2024.**

The growing length of shelter stays points to persistent barriers to stable, affordable housing. **Survivors are staying longer because safe, long-term options are increasingly out of reach.** At the same time, demand continues to exceed capacity: in 2024, over 1,000 shelter requests were denied due to lack of space—more than double the number denied in 2020. This shortage strains already-stretched programs, leaving many without immediate safety or secure refuge.

The data reveals a system under pressure. Fewer individuals are entering shelter, but those who do need more sustained support to navigate housing, safety, and healing. Virginia's shelter providers continue working to meet these complex needs with limited resources. These trends make clear the **urgent need for expanded emergency shelter, affordable housing, and wraparound services** so every survivor has not just a place to go, but a path forward.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

A CRITICAL LIFELINE

From 2020 to 2024, Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies provided transitional housing to hundreds of survivors each year. In 2024, **183 adults** and **155 children** were housed, totaling **105,070 nights of support; the highest in five years**. While the number of people served has remained steady, the increase in total nights underscores how critical transitional housing is to survivors to rebuilding their safety, stability, and independence. These programs offer not just shelter, but time, space, and support for survivors navigating the long road to healing.

NUMBERS OF ADULTS AND CHILDREN WHO STAYED IN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FROM VIRGINIA'S SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGENCIES, INCLUDING TOTAL NIGHTS OF HOUSING PROVIDED

YEAR	ADULTS HOUSED	CHILDREN HOUSED	TOTAL NIGHTS PROVIDED
2020	186	187	91,167
2021	178	173	89,378
2022	166	142	93,200
2023	182	174	94,107
2024	183	155	105,070

The rising number of nights survivors spend in transitional housing points to **deepening barriers to permanent housing**. Despite serving about the same number of people each year, **survivors are staying longer**, reflecting the impact of housing shortages, poverty, discrimination, and systemic inequities. Sexual and domestic violence programs are doing more with the same limited resources, absorbing the weight of a strained housing system while continuing to offer a crucial bridge to long-term safety. **Survivors aren't just in transition—they're stuck**. Without more investment in affordable housing, rental assistance, and wraparound services, too many will remain in limbo and unable to move forward, despite their readiness to rebuild.



2024

THE REALITY SURVIVORS ARE LIVING

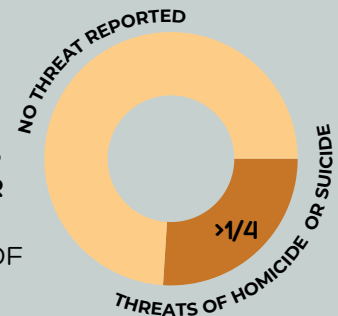
USE OF WEAPON

19% OF SURVIVORS
STATED THAT THE PERPETRATOR
USED A WEAPON AGAINST THEM,
INCLUDING FIREARMS

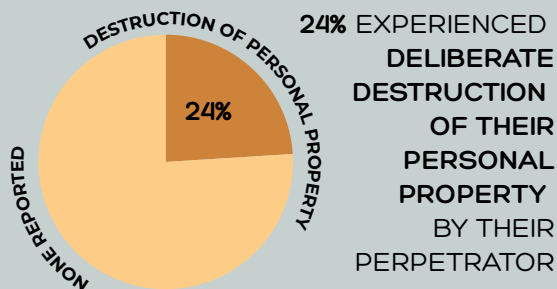


THREATS OF DEATH

MORE THAN A QUARTER OF SURVIVORS
FACED THREATS
OF HOMICIDE OR SUICIDE
AT THE HANDS OF
THEIR ABUSER



DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY



24% EXPERIENCED
DELIBERATE
DESTRUCTION
OF THEIR
PERSONAL
PROPERTY
BY THEIR
PERPETRATOR

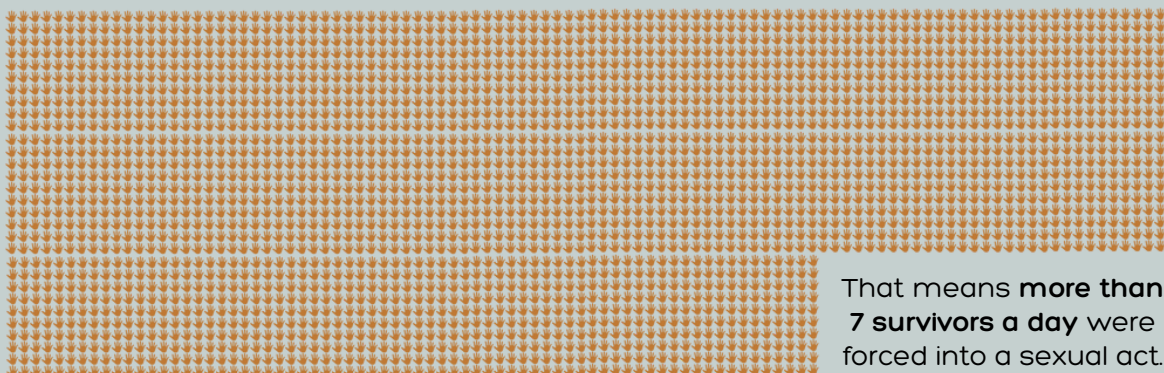
STRANGULATION

OVER 20% EXPERIENCED
HAVING THEIR BREATHING
OBSTRUCTED OR
FORCIBLY BLOCKED

>20%

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

MORE THAN 2,700 SURVIVORS REPORTED
BEING FORCED INTO SEXUAL ACTS AGAINST THEIR WILL



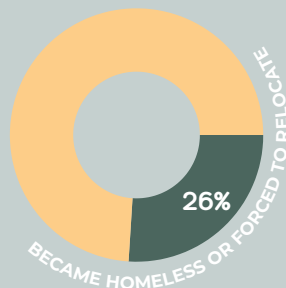
That means **more than 7 survivors a day** were forced into a sexual act.

2024

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VIOLENCE



HOUSING



HOUSING INSECURITY

26% OF SURVIVORS BECAME HOMELESS OR WERE FORCED TO RELOCATE, OFTEN WITH LITTLE OR NO SUPPORT, HIGHLIGHTING THE NEED FOR SUSTAINED HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND EMERGENCY SHELTER CAPACITY.

105,070

NIGHTS OF TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROVIDED

HOUSING INSTABILITY

SURVIVORS IN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING RECEIVED **105,070 NIGHTS** OF HOUSING SUPPORT IN 2024, DEMONSTRATING THE SCALE OF **NEED FOR LONGER-TERM STABILIZATION BEYOND EMERGENCY SHELTER**.

AT THE TIME OF **SHELTER EXIT**, SURVIVORS WERE OFTEN **STILL IN UNSTABLE HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS** (E.G., LIVING WITH FRIENDS/FAMILY, RETURNING TO ABUSIVE SITUATIONS, OR LEAVING THE AREA).



WORK & SCHOOL



IMPACTS ON WORK & SCHOOL

MORE THAN 20% OF SURVIVORS MISSED WORK OR SCHOOL DUE TO ABUSE, REFLECTING HOW VIOLENCE INTERRUPTS DAILY LIFE AND LIMITS OPPORTUNITIES.

For many survivors, **the inability to safely remain employed or housed** results in compounding challenges, including **debt, childcare disruption, and dependence on public services**.

This data reinforces what advocates see every day: that **violence is not only a personal safety issue but also a crisis of housing, workforce participation, and family economic security**.



- IN RESPONSE TO THESE RISKS:
- **80% OF ADULTS WITH A KNOWN RISK FACTOR RECEIVED INDIVIDUALIZED SAFETY PLANNING**
 - **55% OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN RECEIVED CHILD-SPECIFIC SAFETY SUPPORT.**

These plans are deeply impacted when funding cuts lead to staff reductions and related limitations to services.

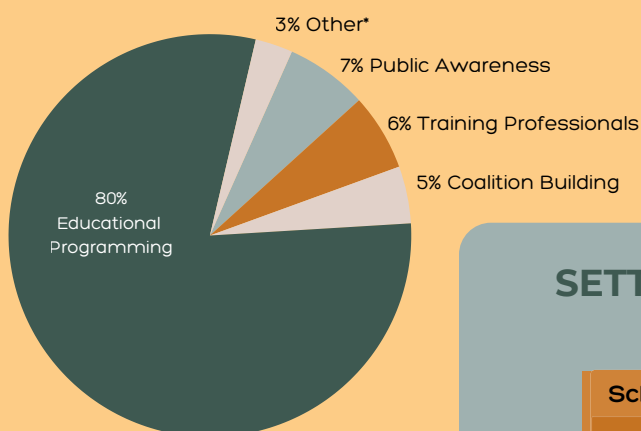
PREVENTION SERVICES:

STOPPING VIOLENCE BEFORE IT STARTS

Primary prevention is essential to building safe, stable, and nurturing communities. Primary prevention strategies are designed to promote healthy behaviors and communities by shifting attitudes, behaviors, and norms that support and perpetuate the root causes of violence.

In 2024, **20** sexual and domestic violence agencies implemented **697** prevention strategies across the Commonwealth in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations.

TYPES OF PREVENTION STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED

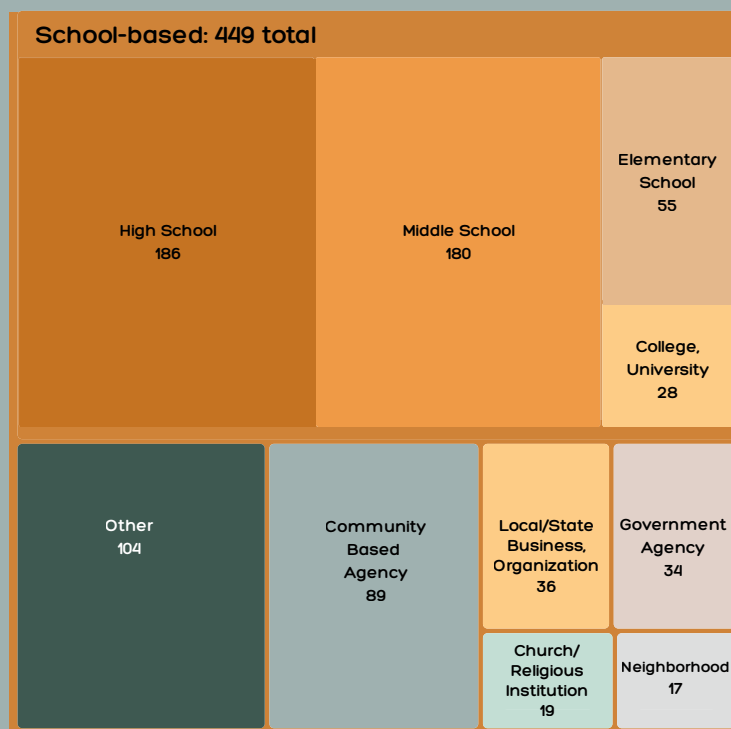


*Other includes media campaigns, policy change, and social norms change.

The needs of rural communities remain underserved in many ways. Preventionists are taking steps to bolster systems that support healthy relationships and communities in rural Virginia.

OF THE 45 LOCALITIES WHERE PREVENTION STRATEGIES WERE REPORTED IN VADATA IN 2024, 38% WERE RURAL COUNTIES.

SETTINGS OF PREVENTION STRATEGIES WITH NUMBER OF STRATEGIES*



*More than one setting may be selected, therefore this list totals 748 locations for 697 strategies.

PREVENTION SERVICES:

STOPPING VIOLENCE BEFORE IT STARTS

Many factors can increase or decrease the likelihood of someone perpetrating violence. Risk factors can increase the risk of perpetrating violence and protective factors can reduce the risk.

Sexual and domestic violence agencies implement strategies addressing risk and protective factors across the social ecology. The following represent a selection of risk and protective factors addressed by Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies:

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

ADDRESSED BY VIRGINIA'S SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS



RISK FACTORS

PERCENTAGE OF ALL STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED

- 69%** Experience that violence and coercion are accepted and effective "means to an end".
- 65%** Absence of role models who promote healthy relationships and healthy sexuality.
- 39%** Lack of social development.
- 36%** Belief in rigid, stereotyped gender roles.



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

PERCENTAGE OF ALL STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED

- 72%** Presence of skills to experience healthy sexuality and engage in healthy relationships.
- 58%** The presence of just/fair boundaries and expectations about healthy relationships and healthy sexuality are applied consistently across community entities.
- 37%** Peers, families, and intimate partners effectively identify and respond to behaviors that are potential precursors to violence.

SERVICES ARE WORKING: SURVIVORS SAY SO

Survivor accounts indicate that advocacy services play a pivotal role in determining whether individuals remain in crisis or move toward safety and stability. Without these services, survivors would have:

FACED HOMELESSNESS

Many would have had to live with friends or family, in their vehicles, or on the streets, with no safe housing options for themselves or their children.



FACED DEADLY CONSEQUENCES

Some feared they would have been killed by their abusive partner without intervention, support, or a way out.



LACKED CRITICAL LEGAL KNOWLEDGE

Survivors reported they would have been unaware of their legal rights, including access to protective orders, child custody options, and immigration protections.



SUFFERED IN SILENCE

Survivors said they would have remained silent about the abuse, believing no one would listen, understand, or help.



STAYED WITH THEIR ABUSER

Without support, they felt they would have had no choice but to remain in dangerous and abusive relationships, often also exposing children to the violence.



These responses make one thing clear: Advocacy services are not optional—they are **life-saving**. They offer:

- Emotional support and trauma-informed care
- Safety planning and crisis intervention
- Emergency housing and financial assistance
- Legal advocacy and navigation of complex systems
- Empowerment, information, and a pathway to long-term safety.

CONCLUSION:

A STRONG SYSTEM, BUT A FRAGILE FUTURE



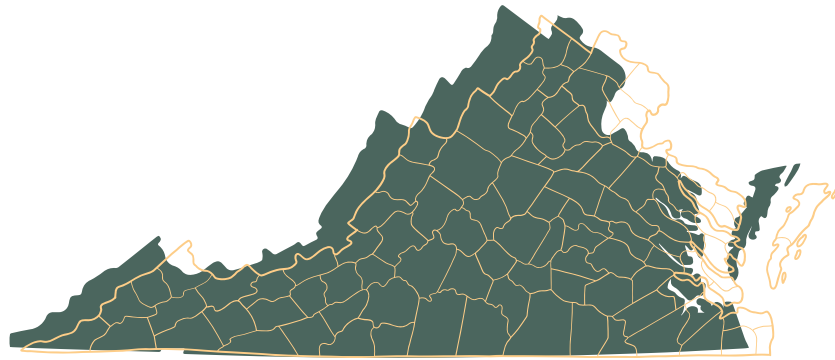
The last five years of data reveal a powerful truth: **Virginia's sexual and domestic violence advocates continue to show up for survivors in deep and meaningful ways.** Every call that is answered, every hour of advocacy, every night of shelter and transitional housing reflects a network of people committed to helping survivors find safety, healing, and hope. Survivors are reaching out with increasingly complex needs, and advocates are meeting them with skill, empathy, and determination.

Advocacy works. It changes lives. It provides survivors with the tools, support, and information they need to move forward. And it highlights how critical it is to maintain strong, adaptable, and survivor-centered systems of care. The needs are great, but so is the commitment of the people doing this work. With every conversation, every safety plan, and every moment of connection, advocates are helping survivors reclaim their futures.

Building a safer Virginia isn't the work of advocates alone; it's a shared responsibility. Survivors need communities that see them, believe them, and respond with real, tangible support. This means every sector, every decision-maker, and every neighbor has a role to play.

State and local leaders can align policies across housing, health, and justice to remove barriers and make safety more accessible. Philanthropic partners can invest in deep, sustained care that meets survivors where they are. Private sector leaders can create pathways to stability through child care access, employment, and trauma-informed practices.

The future we deserve is within reach. It is determined by the choices we make and the work we do now.



ABOUT VADATA

VAdata is a secure, web-based data system used by many of Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies to document survivor experiences of violence and the services and resources provided to meet their needs.

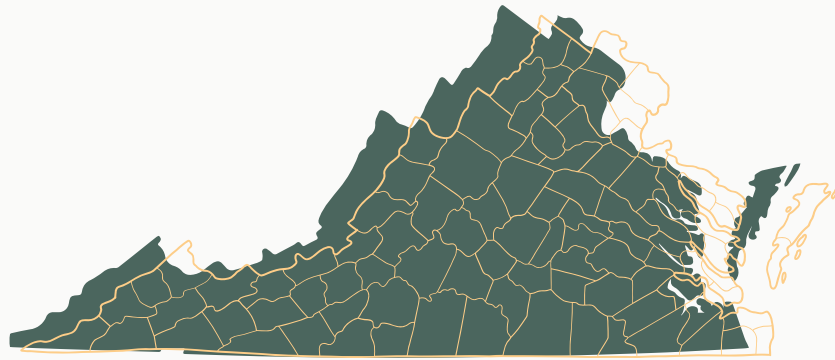
As the Commonwealth's primary repository of information on the experiences of survivors and the services they receive, VAdata plays a critical role in shaping our understanding of the impacts of sexual and domestic violence in Virginia.

Since its inception in 1996, VAdata has set the standard for survivor-centered, confidential, and ethical data collection practices. It supports effective service delivery while also providing data that informs statewide policy, funding, and advocacy efforts.

The information in this resource was compiled by the Action Alliance, primarily using reports generated through the VAdata system. Unless otherwise indicated, all data points reflect information submitted by member agencies or gathered directly by the Action Alliance through VAdata, listening sessions, and evaluations. Data collection form samples are publicly available at https://vadata.org/p_access.html.

For questions about this report or the VAdata system, please contact vadataadmin@vsdvalliance.org.





IN GRATITUDE

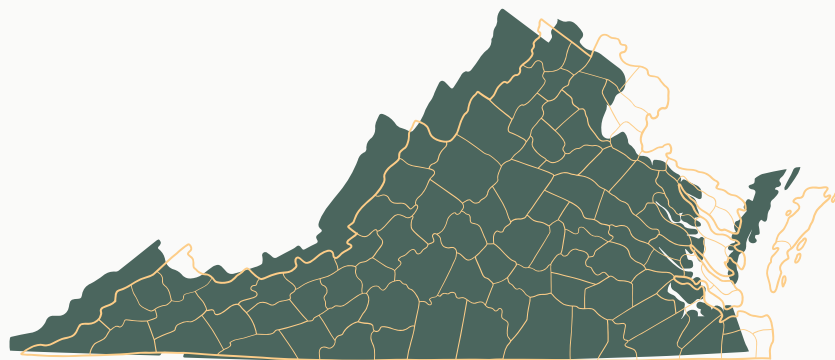
The Action Alliance extends its deep appreciation to the local agencies, the Data Systems Advisory Committee, and our state partners and funders for their ongoing support of VAdat. Their commitment is essential to the continued development and refinement of this vital tool in service of survivors across the Commonwealth.

We are deeply grateful for the unwavering dedication of advocates who support survivors of sexual and domestic violence across the Commonwealth. Your compassion, strength, and commitment provide hope and healing to people navigating some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Through your tireless efforts, you help restore safety, dignity, and empowerment, reminding survivors that they are not alone. Thank you for being a voice, a guide, and a source of resilience in the face of trauma.

Finally, the Action Alliance extends its deepest gratitude to the thousands of survivors who entrust Virginia's sexual and domestic violence advocates with their stories each day, in pursuit of healing and safety for themselves and their families. Your willingness to share your experiences through information shared in VAdat provides invaluable insight and drives meaningful change. It is a profound honor to stand beside you as you navigate courageous paths toward peace and empowerment.

FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Support for the operation of the VAdat 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-24-099) 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.



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