

# Annual Report FY24

## Victim Services Advisory Board

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## Advocating for Victims of Crime



Montgomery County, MD

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## Message from the Chairs

Dear County Executive Elrich and County Council Members:

The Victim Services Advisory Board (“VSAB” or the “Board”) is pleased to present its FY 2024-2025 annual report. This year’s initiatives indicate that, while overall crime related to the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have peaked, certain types of crime have continued to rise. Montgomery County seems to be settling into a 'new normal' post-pandemic, though the impact of the past few years' crime surge is still being felt by many victims in the county. The Board’s overall goal is to ensure that its mission and activities are responsive to the needs of the community when advising on policy to administration officials, advocating for legislation with the County Council, and communicating with the public through various forums.

To ensure the needs of victims are properly met, we consider the various impacts crime can have on victims and their families. County government continues to have a responsibility for providing sufficient funding which ensures quality services are available to crime victims. It is also critical that the government and community continue to work together, and that the county agencies and programs partner to address the needs of crime victims. The Board will keep advocating for solutions that benefit all stakeholders and respond to our community’s needs.

Moving forward, the VSAB will continue to provide both the County Executive and County Council with recommendations about how to best meet the needs of crime victims and their families in Montgomery County. We make it our mission to serve this community. On behalf of the members of the VSAB, we respectfully share our report with your office.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Koosed, J.D.  
Neda Bolourian, JD, LL.M



## **VSAB Mission Statement**

The Victim Services Advisory Board (VSAB) supports Montgomery County's commitment to serving crime victims and their families. These include victims of rape, domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual assault, homicide, terrorism, hate violence, human trafficking, robbery, driving while intoxicated (DWI), vehicular manslaughter, assault, battery, burglary, arson, larceny, stalking, carjacking, harassment, vandalism, and bullying.

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## Mandate

The Board must periodically:

- Review available county services and facilities for victims and their families;
- Determine the service and program needs of victims and families;
- Submit at least one annual report to the County Executive and County Council addressing the progress of victim services and actions needed to improve those programs; and
- Make recommendations for the appropriate allocation of funds in accordance with Board priorities and county financial resources.

## Meetings

Before the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Board met the fourth Thursday of each month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in person at the office of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, 1301 Piccard Drive Rockville, MD, 20850. The Board does not meet in August and combines its November and December sessions into one meeting held the first Thursday in December.

During this fiscal year, the Board has adopted a hybrid approach to meetings, combining virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams or Zoom with several in-person meetings. Whether virtual or in person, all meetings are open to the public.

## Membership



**Neda Bolourian, JD, LL.M**  
**Board member since 2019, Board Co-Chair**

*"I am proud to be a member of the Victim Services Advisory Board because I have the opportunity to work with professionals who deeply care about their work and the citizens of our great county. I am inspired by all the good work that gets done in this group and hope that we can continue to make a positive impact."*



**Brian D. Koosed, JD**  
**Board member since 2019**

*"I want to give back to my Montgomery County community by helping to serve those who are most vulnerable and in need."*



**Kathryn Pontzer, JD, LL.M.**  
**Board member since January 2018, Board Co-Chair**

*"As a member of the VSAB, I want to use my experience in government relations to continue to build on the community supports needed for victims of crimes."*



**Leah Schwartz, MSW, LCSW-C**  
**Board member since 2018**

*"I joined the Victim Services Advisory Board to advocate for the victims of crime in our community, and to increase awareness and education within the community about what resources are already available. I want to be a voice for additional victim services and to help empower individuals to be the voice for themselves."*



**Lawrence Center, JD**  
**Board member since 2021**

*"I joined the Board to return to my career roots, having worked in criminal justice after law school and having served for years as a volunteer with the County Sexual Assault Service, Abused Persons Program and Community Crisis Center."*

## Membership Cont.d



**Wendy Ayala**  
**Board member since 2022**

*"I joined the advisory board to be a voice for victims and ensure individuals are aware of and educated about the vast resources that are available in Montgomery County."*



**David Young**  
**Board member since 2021**

*"My professional life is devoted to addressing violent conflict abroad, and I came to believe it was just as important to join VSAB and do the same in my own community."*



**Heather Thompson**  
**Board member since 2022**

*"I joined the board because as the sister of a murder victim I'd like to help other victims get the assistance that they need and deserve."*

***Not pictured:***

**Shan Anderson**  
**Board Member since 2022**

**Alan Schulman**  
**Board Member since 2023**

***Jasmin Whitefield***  
***Board Member since 2022***

**Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members**

- Ellen Alexander (Montgomery County Police)
- Dolores Briceno (State's Attorney's Office)
- Linda Lochner (HHS/Trauma Services)
- Dana Bell (HHS/Trauma Services)
- Carla Bradley (HHS/Trauma Services)
- Maria Vicky Solis (HHS/Trauma Services)
- VACANT (Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation)
- VACANT (Office of Public Defender)
- Rosalia Scotman (HHS/Trauma Services)



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## The COVID-19 Pandemic

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided, its impact on the county continues to resonate. Crime victims faced additional challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Increased instances of DV/IPV victims being subject to stay-at-home orders that may have forced them to remain at home in close proximity to their abusers;
- Increased community rates of violent crime and homicides, perhaps driven by the closing of schools and the loss of other support systems.
- Increased demand for county services benefiting victims corresponding with the broader increase in community crime rates; and
- Added health risks and other barriers associated with seeking assistance.

These factors have largely continued to subside during FY24, and the rise in crime associated with the COVID-19 pandemic has largely peaked. However, certain crimes have continued to increase. This fact is borne out by the available data. For example, the number of victims served increased from 1585 in FY23 to 1772 in FY24. In the past five years, there has been a 30% increase in the number of victims served, reflecting that the FY24 needs remain elevated compared to the levels in the county before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, these raw figures do not reflect that the severity of many cases has also increased and remained at an elevated level. There has been a substantial rise in homicides, domestic violence, sexual violence, and reports of strangulations since the pandemic began, even if some of that severity has continued to lessen in FY24.

As discussed below, the Board has attempted to meet the unique challenges

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presented during this reporting period with an increased emphasis on its core mission: tireless victim advocacy throughout the county and, where appropriate and permitted, collaboration with the county's representatives at the State level. These efforts have included regularly communicating with members of the County Council, with the County Executive, with County Council and County Executive staff, and with the County's delegation to the State legislature. Consequently, this reporting period has continued to see a substantial increase in the Board's community outreach and advocacy, all based on our goal of helping victims navigate the "new normal" of a post-COVID world.

## **FY24 Priorities Overview**

The board emphasized several priorities throughout this reporting period:

- Maintaining the increased levels of funding, and expansion of services, for DHHS Trauma Services that were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that the needs of crime victims are consistently met.
- Advocating for bridge and permanent housing for IPV/DV victims transitioning from the Betty Ann Kraknke (BAK) DV shelter, including working with the county's Services to End and Prevent Homelessness to start a pilot program designed to assist these victims.
- Surveying county victim services providers to determine the scope of services available to victims and the challenges that they face.
- Providing education and outreach to the community about available public and private programs and resources for crime victims and their families.

## **FY24 Activity Highlights**

Advocacy activities designed to implement the Board's priorities this reporting period included:

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- Meeting with County Executive Marc Elrich and members of his staff;
  - Meeting with County Council member and Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee Gabe Albornoz;
  - Meeting with Council member and Chair of the Public Safety Committee, Sidney Katz;
  - Meeting with Council members on the County Council's Health and Human Services Committee, Dawn Luedtke and Laurie Anne-Sayles, and members of their staffs;
  - Meeting with Council members Natali Fani-Gonzalez, Kristin Mink, Marilyn Balcombe, Evan Glass, Will Jawando, and Kate Stewart, and members of their staffs;
  - Meeting with Senator Kelly and members of her staff;
  - Meeting with Delegate Shetty and members of her staff;
  - Meeting with the staff of the County's Services to End and Prevent Homelessness on bridge housing for IPV victims transitioning out of the BAK Shelter;
  - Meeting with Dorne Hill, DHHS Senior Administrator of Crisis Services, Intake and Trauma Services;
  - Testifying at the County Council Health and Human Services Committee Policy Meeting and the County Council Budget Hearings;
  - Reporting at the Montgomery County DHHS Director's Quarterly Leadership Meeting with Boards, Commissions and Committees;
  - Attending meetings with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission (CJCC);
  - Attending and participating in Montgomery County Police Department Focus Group meetings, strengthening ties between MCPS and the Board;

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- Submitting testimony on a personal basis and in respective personal capacities to the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Senate Finance Committee, House Judiciary Committee, and House Economic Matters Committee;
  - Attending many victim-focused events;
  - Maintaining an active social media presence on Facebook through the Board's dedicated page.

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# Priority: Bridge Housing for Victims of Domestic Violence



## GOALS

The VSAB maintains the following goals addressing this priority:

1. Establish a plan to ensure safe, one-year bridge housing to end homelessness for domestic violence victims so that they can become self-sufficient survivors;
2. Increase access to permanent housing, including improving the Vulnerability Index (VI-SPDAT) point system for domestic violence victims; and
3. Allocate funding for in-depth and targeted case management.

## BACKGROUND

The Betty Ann Krahnke shelter, also known as BAK, is Montgomery County's domestic violence shelter. BAK is intended for emergency and short-term stays for domestic violence, trafficking, and rape victims. It is a lifeline for survivors who are fleeing violence. The shelter was established to provide immediate protection and case management to assist trauma survivors with safety planning, and other necessary services. Research data reveals that survivors who access shelter services and follow through on the program's recommendations are less likely to be re-assaulted or killed. The maximum stay at BAK is 60 days; however, some clients require extensions to accomplish their initial goals for a safe discharge.

Survivors who are discharged from the shelter often move in with family or friends. Some access homeless services and some rent their own housing.

Unfortunately, the County suffers from a lack of affordable housing options for this population. Bridge housing, which is the most appropriate option for survivors needing additional time to resolve their homelessness, is not adequate.

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The County also lacks necessary intensive case management services for survivors. These survivors need continuous support to address long-term safety planning and move toward a future free from violence.

BAK was designed as an emergency shelter targeting high-risk victims at imminent risk of harm and domestic violence-related high-risk lethality. Its capacity has increased to 60 beds to accommodate the growing number of domestic violence victims in our county. The provision of continuous housing to these victims is necessary to prevent potential homicide or serious re-assault. When victims are not able to find appropriate housing accommodations and remain at BAK for an extended period, their presence prevents higher-risk or immediate danger victims from gaining access to safe shelter. When BAK is full, victims seeking shelter are housed in local motels. To create space for high-risk individuals at BAK, lower risk victims who could benefit from transitional housing are shifted to motels for 30 days, so they can continue seeking remedies for their homelessness. However, motels do not provide childcare or meals, making it almost impossible for these victims to continue pursuing their independence goals. Motels also do not offer ongoing case management and safety planning. This unfortunate situation increases victims' risk for danger and re-assault. Specifically, the most up-to-date annual data reveals that:

- The number of victims seeking shelter has been greater in the past two FYs compared to previous years.
- In FY 2024, more than 31% of discharged victims returned to live with family or friends. Approximately seven clients returned to their abuser an average of approximately one every other month. Twenty clients entered into transitional housing.
- Domestic violence victims cannot be protected from their abusers while staying in motels or after they move from one family member's residence to the next. When victims are unable to receive needed services and support, they sometimes return to their abusers to prevent further homelessness.

## BACKGROUND

### Priority: Bridge Housing for Victims of Domestic Violence

Included below is the BAK discharge summary data for FY24 (Tables 1-3).

Table 1: BAK Disposition Summary FY24

Code	Disposition	Count	Percent
1.	MoCo Emerg Svcs (Motel/Short Term)/Shelter	38	22%
2.	Family/Friend	49	28%
3.	Return to Abuser*	9	5%
4.	Home with Protective Order	13	7.5%
5.	Transitional	20	11.5%
6.	New Home/Independent Living	35	20%
7.	Treatment	2	1%
8.	Unknown	6	3%
9.	Other	0	0%
10.	Unfavorable Discharge	1	0.5%
11.	Inappropriate Referral	0	0.0%
12.	Didn't Stay at Shelter, Bed Held	2	1%
Total Clients		175	95%

Included below is the BAK discharge summary data for FY20-FY22 (Tables 1-3).

**Table 1: BAK Disposition Summary FY21**

Code	Disposition	Count	Percent
1	MoCo Emergency Svcs (Motel/short term)	18	7%
2	Family/Friend	86	33%
3	Return to Abuser	4	2%
5	Home with Protective Order	30	12%
6	Transitional	6	2%
7	New Home	34	13%
8	Treatment/Shelter	19	7%
9	Unknown	20	8%
10	Other	1	8%
11	Unfavorable Discharge	15	6%
12	Inappropriate Referral	7	3%
13	Didn't stay at shelter, bed held	19	7%
Total clients w/disposition codes			<b>100%</b>



Included below is the BAK discharge summary for FY20-FY22 (Tables 1-3).

**Table 2: BAK Disposition Summary FY2020**

Code	Disposition	Count	Percent
1	MoCo Emergency Svcs (Motel/short term)	17	11%
2	Family/Friend	47	31%
3	Return to Abuser	3	2%
5	Home with Protective Order	13	9%
6	Transitional	4	3%
7	New Home	17	11%
8	Treatment/Shelter	9	6%
9	Unknown	13	9%
10	Other	1	1%
11	Unfavorable Discharge	10	7%
12	Inappropriate Referral	7	5%
13	Didn't stay at shelter, bed held	9	6%
Total clients w/disposition codes		<b>150</b>	<b>94%</b>

\*Of 158 total adult clients, there is a disposition code for 150



The high cost of living in Montgomery County, including childcare, coupled with typically low-level job skills, make survivors of domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) highly vulnerable to further victimization, loss of employment, and chronic homelessness. Victims leaving the BAK often do not qualify for transitional and permanent low-cost housing. They also face an average wait of two to five years for housing vouchers.

Moreover, when using the Vulnerability Index (VI-SPDAT), a widely recognized tool for determining the need for housing assistance in Montgomery County, domestic violence victims receive only a one-point priority. Additionally, some victims have not qualified for the Rapid Rehousing Program due to their lack of stable employment, poor credit, or criminal record. Changing the County's existing policy concerning domestic violence victims and the VI-SPDAT Vulnerability Index point system used would help to close the service gap between those discharged from BAK and those who qualify for county housing assistance.

DV and IPV victims may face additional barriers to affordable housing due to their poor credit ratings and legal problems stemming from the abuse. Some victims might also have pending immigration cases that prevent them from seeking lawful employment. Furthermore, many housing programs do not favor survivors because of fears that they will bring problems with them or will make the community less safe.

Finally, most DV and IPV survivors do not qualify for permanent supportive housing services, which require a documented permanent disability. Although survivors often suffer from mental illness related to DV/IPV – including depression, substance abuse, and PTSD – authorities do not perceive these conditions as serious barriers to housing. Consequently, these victims do not meet the criteria for permanent supportive housing and are left with no alternative except to live with relatives or friends. They can also find themselves and their children frequently moving to avoid contact with their abusers. This is a daunting prospect that poses many risks, especially for young mothers with large families. Even the most resilient victims are at risk for homelessness or returning to abusers. Therefore, many of these victims end up back at BAK after being re-victimized.



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## Priority: Bridge Housing for Victims of DV/IPV

Finding bridge housing and/or a system for prioritizing DV/IPV victims' access to long-term housing has been a top priority of the Board since FY14.

The Board repeatedly advocates for bridge housing programs serving young female-headed households most vulnerable to the effects of DV/IPV. Such programs would:

1. Help break the cycle of violence and dependency;
2. Deliver supportive case management services;
3. Afford victims time to build needed life skills (e.g., education, GED, vocational, parenting);
4. Provide increased opportunities for trauma recovery and empowerment; and
5. Offer a resolution of housing barriers (e.g., legal problems, identifying appropriate long-term housing).

The VSAB first began focusing on this priority by exploring the options available for both bridge and permanent housing in its monthly meetings. An appointed task force then met with county leaders to discuss transitional housing options and strategies. In FY15, as a pilot project, homes on Fleet Street in downtown Rockville were designated to be renovated and used for bridge housing for DV victims and their families. Case work was provided by a VASAP employee, who already maintained a full-time position description (No case worker was dedicated to families in these homes). The Department of General Services refurbished the homes to house as many as four families transitioning from the BAK.

Subsequently, it was determined that these properties had unsafe levels of lead and they were deemed uninhabitable. The families were forced to move out. The Board recommended that these properties be remediated so they could continue to be utilized for housing DV victims. However, the Board was informed by DHHS that these properties would not be used for this purpose because adequate case management resources were not available. The properties have since been repurposed for other uses in the County.

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## **Priority 1: Bridge Housing for Victims of DV/IPV**

The Board continues to advise that there is a need to identify and earmark bridge housing options for DV/IPV victims leaving the BAK who do not possess the ability to secure a safe place to live. One-year bridge housing with case management services means that domestic violence victims would be given employment support, job training, related childcare, financial resources, and permanent housing.

We are encouraged that, during the past two years, the county has expanded the number of slots in the Rapid Rehousing Program including slots specifically designated for households fleeing domestic violence. However, we acknowledge that this is only an initial effort to address this critical community need. The Board continues to actively seek funds, and to support all efforts to raise money, for crucial case management services.

In 2020, the Board recommended that Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care (CoC) bonus funding awarded to the County be prioritized to address the need for housing for DV/IPV victims. We specifically requested that this be included as part of the Interagency Commission on Homelessness (ICH) CoC Consolidated Application to HUD. The County was awarded funding to expand Rapid Rehousing for victims of domestic violence and the grant will be managed by the National Center for Children and Families. However, there are no plans to provide necessary case management services as part of this program.

While the bonus funding options would have allowed the county to apply to use the funds to establish a program for bridge housing with case management services, no county service providers applied. To qualify, a service provider must meet minimum requirements. The Board believes that increased education about and awareness of the grant writing process and qualification requirements would help service providers be more successful in the future. The Board asks that training be offered to potential providers in a timely manner to prepare them to meet important deadlines during the short HUD application process.

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# Priority: Increased Staff for Victim Services

## Programs

### GOALS

Before this reporting period, the VSAB advocated for three full-time victim assistants for HHS Trauma Services. A funding request of \$196,000 would have been required to address this priority. During this reporting period, however, the Board recognized the financial challenges confronting the county because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, once the pandemic began, the Board initially advocated for maintaining current staffing levels for HHS Trauma Services (APP and VASAP).

Notwithstanding that situation, and realizing that the COVID-19 pandemic has, thankfully, not been as detrimental to county and state finances as initially expected, the Board continues to believe that three additional full-time victim assistants are warranted. This belief is buttressed by the significant increase in demand for victim services during the pandemic. For example, 2023 and 2024 data shows that there has been an increase of 187 victims served. The severity of cases has also become more critical, with increases in homicides, domestic violence, sexual violence, and more strangulation reports.

### BACKGROUND AND PRIORITY STATUS

#### Priority: Increased Staffing for Victim Services Programs

There is a need for more Trauma Services victim assistants (VAs) to staff the local Circuit and District Court courthouses in Rockville and Silver Spring. These assistants play a critical role helping crime victims within the courthouses. Trauma Services VAs work independently of the criminal justice system and serve on the frontline in our courtrooms.



## **BACKGROUND AND PRIORITY STATUS**

### **Priority: Increased Staffing for Victim Services Programs**

Victim assistants aid crime victims in filing peace and protective orders, accompany victims during trials, help develop victim impact statements, hold court school, assist in filing family emergency maintenance, attend show cause hearings for DVoffenders, and connect victims to needed resources and to victims' services program. Currently, there are an insufficient number of VAs, particularly in the Rockville and Silver Spring courts to meet the needs of victims. The unfortunate cuts have produced delays in processing victims' compensation cases and resulted in less court coverage in both Circuit and District courts, where crime victims seek immediate assistance.

Additional therapists, case managers, and intake workers are necessary to deliver quality services and meet the evolving needs of the community. During the last year, there has been a significant increase in service needs including therapy and victim assistance. Currently, the program has to waitlist survivors in need of counseling services. Counseling services are instrumental to victims of crime in helping them rebuild a sense of safety and control. They provide a safe and supportive space for them to process their trauma, express emotions, and begin healing. Additionally, these services help victims to regain confidence, understand their emotions, and prevent long-term psychological effects like PTSD, depression, or isolation.

As reported by Health and Human Services, there is also limited access to legal representation for victims. The Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) and other non-profit agencies can accommodate only a limited number of cases, leaving many survivors without appropriate legal representation whether an attorney or victim assistant.

Having an advocate helps victims when judges determine final protective orders and set guaranteed monitored exchanges of children with the noncustodial parent. Advocates add good value in this county with budget constraints.

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The Board is happy to report that funding for the Trauma Services Program has been maintained in the County Executive's FY23 and FY24 operating budgets. However, no increase in staffing is currently expected. The Board continues to believe such an increase is warranted, particularly considering the enhanced demand for victim services during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to work with the County Council to advocate for these increased resources.

## Legislative Affairs Report

The Board supports any legislative changes that will improve the lives of crime victims. During the 2024 Maryland General Assembly session, the VSAB Legislative Subcommittee identified twelve bills for individual VSAB members to consider supporting by submitting personal letters in their individual capacity as concerned citizens. Ten of these bills were introduced, and seven of these bills passed the General Assembly and were signed into law.

Laws were passed that:

- Change requirements for determining consent in sexual assault cases by requiring proof of a clear and voluntary agreement by the victim that could be by words or conduct, and strikes "force" or "threat of force" as an element of second-degree rape.
- Expand the definition of sexual solicitation of a minor to include production of child pornography.
- Extend the statute of limitations for prosecuting stalking cases to ten years and for prosecuting sexual extortion cases to five years, and eliminates the statute of limitations altogether for prosecuting revenge pornography cases.
- Offer the same rights and assistance to victims of child labor trafficking that now exist for victims of child sex trafficking.
- Alter the operations and requirements of the state Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and remove barriers and requirements to be eligible for victim compensation in Maryland, including expediting the process for determining and awarding compensation.
- Require that the Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center be included as a resource in the notification requirements provided to victims, their families and witnesses when a defendant is released from confinement.

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- Establish the Victims of Domestic Violence Certification Program by authorizing the federally recognized Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence to certify programs that provide services to victims of domestic violence, and create the Victims of Domestic Violence Program Grant Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund in the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services.

Bills failed to move through the legislative process during the most recent General Assembly session that would:

- Require that non-fatal strangulation forensic examination expenses be paid for by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.
- Establish a requirement and process for law enforcement and victim notification when a person fails a background check to purchase a gun.
- Require the State Board of Education, and nonpublic schools that hold a certificate of approval from the State Board and participate in the Nonpublic Schools Textbook and Technology Grants Program, to develop and implement an age-appropriate education program on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault. The program would include material promoting the awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking for students in grades six through eight.

Several members of the Montgomery County Delegation championed the work required to introduce several of these bills, to advocate for hearings on these critical issues, and to ultimately pass several of them. Among these legislators, the Board specifically recognizes the leadership of Senators Will Smith, Jeff Waldstreicher, and Ariana Kelly, and Delegates Charlotte Crutchfield, Emily Shetty, and Lesley Lopez, as well as the support of other legislators from the county's delegation who co-sponsored bills and advocated for their passage.

VSAB members, acting solely in their individual capacity as citizens, coordinated virtually with staff members of Senators and Delegates about these bills, and submitted written testimony as citizens to several committees in support of them. Specifically, VSAB members, acting solely in their individual capacities as citizens, submitted written testimony to, among others, the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee, the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee, the House Judiciary Committee, the House Appropriations Committee and the House Ways & Means Committee.



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During the reporting period, the Board also met with nearly all of the Members of the Montgomery County Council, as well as County Executive Marc Elrich and his staff, to discuss a range of issues addressing the needs of crime victims. These included our fiscal year budget priorities, such as increased staffing for Trauma Services and Bridge Housing for victims of intimate-partner violence, both of which are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this Report. We were encouraged by the follow-up outreach from Council members including staff from County Executive Elrich's office and Council member Natali Fani-Gonzalez's office, requesting further information and discussion to better understand the housing needs for victims of domestic violence. Similarly, we appreciated the effort from County Executive staff to facilitate meetings between our representatives and staff from the County's Services to End and Prevent Homelessness. They were willing to continue discussions toward developing a plan to address these bridge housing challenges.

## Public Education and Outreach Report

The VSAB's Public Affairs, Education and Outreach subcommittee is charged with sharing the Board's work with the Montgomery County community. Our mission is to keep the public informed about advocacy efforts, legislation, resources, and crime prevention. The subcommittee uses social media to spread awareness of its activities and the services available in the County and state. Members also attend community events to promote the work of DHHS Trauma Services and to educate the public about available programs and resources.

This reporting period, the subcommittee has devoted significant time and effort to public outreach for issues relating to mental health, food insecurity, and healthcare. We have shared resources with the community and will continue to do so.

We continue to provide opportunities for "Calls to Action" where community members are welcome to join the advocacy efforts alongside Board members and community organizations. Additionally, many of the Board members' meetings with legislative officials and community leaders are shared via social media to raise awareness of our ongoing learning, collaboration, and advocacy efforts.

To learn more about us, please find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/Victim-Services-Advisory-Board-of-Montgomery-County-MD-240170336583329/>.

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## Community Providers

### Community Providers/Identifying Future Priorities

Numerous programs and service providers in Montgomery County assist victims of violent crime, including sexual assault and IPV/DV. Indeed, many of these programs offer services to victims throughout Maryland, providing victims with access to legal assistance, medical attention, mental health care, and the personal and financial tools necessary to create a stable, safe life after suffering the trauma of violent crime.

Every two years, the VSAB conducts a survey of the service providers assisting victims in Montgomery County. The Board last conducted a service provider survey for its 2021-2022 annual report. For this annual reporting period, the VSAB again surveyed a number of Montgomery County victim service providers. The Board was interested in learning more about the needs of victims in the county, the goals and needs of the service providers themselves, and how the VSAB can help them meet their goals and address their needs. Throughout the process, the Board also wanted to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected victims in our community, as well as the providers serving them.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, all surveys were conducted through a written questionnaire, which in some instances was followed up with a Zoom or telephone conference. Responses received by the requested deadline are included in this report. Some responses have been paraphrased to aid readability.

### Populations Served and Services Offered

Table 1 provides the names of the programs that provided responses to the Board's questionnaire and/or were interviewed, the number of victims served, the populations served, and the mission/priorities of the service provider. Responses are taken directly from the questionnaire.

**Table 1: Montgomery County Providers of Victim Services names, number of victims served, populations served, and the mission/priorities.**

Service Provider	Mission	Population Served
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)	Support victims of intimate partner violence to become empowered and live safely; educate the community about intimate partner violence and the appropriate responses; and prevent future generations from experiencing intimate partner violence.	Victims of intimate partner violence, serve many Jews, but are not exclusive to the Jewish community.
Montgomery County Family Justice Center	Promote safety, wellness and healing for victims of intimate partner domestic violence.	All victims of intimate partner domestic violence regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. Children under the age of 16 require parental consent for us to assist them.
Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington (KCSC)	KCSC's mission is to assist and empower Asian Americans and new immigrants to become well-adjusted and fully contributing members of the United States through social services, education, advocacy, and development of resources.	We provide support to low-income, limited English proficient Asian American and immigrant victims of domestic violence residing in the Greater DC area. Our focus is particularly on the underserved and marginalized Korean and Chinese communities, who face significant barriers in the areas of domestic violence, dating violence, and sexual assault. These barriers include cultural, social, and linguistic obstacles, a lack of culturally specific domestic violence services, and limited knowledge about and access to existing services. These ethnic groups have a high number of limited English proficient (LEP) community members who are in particular need of culturally tailored outreach, education, and services related to domestic violence, dating violence, and sexual assault.
Montgomery County Department of Police's Victim Assistance Unit (N = NR)	Help reduce the short- and long-term trauma that victims and witnesses experience following a crime.	All crime victims/witnesses who live or are visiting in Montgomery County.
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) & Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) (N = NR)	<p>Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault: Help prevent sexual assault, advocate for accessible, compassionate care for survivors of sexual violence, and work to hold offenders accountable.</p> <p>Sexual Assault Legal Institute: Empower sexual assault survivors through direct legal services and to provide legal training and technical assistance to professionals working with survivors.</p> <p>MCASA and SALI are philosophically committed to providing survivors of sexual assault with legal options to protect their safety and seek justice. Ultimately, the choice of whether, which, and how to utilize the available options belongs to the client. MCASA encourages the use of legal avenues that increase safety, dignity, self-sufficiency, and empowerment. Ultimately, however, the choice to utilize available options belong to the survivor.</p>	Survivors of sexual assault

<p><b>Trauma Services (formerly Abused Persons Program (APP)/Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP))</b></p>	<p>Trauma Services provides nonjudgmental social, informational, and practical support to survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence and survivors of crime including sexual assault/rape, physical assault, homicide, human trafficking, etc.</p> <p>Trauma Services promotes safety, healing, justice, and rights for all survivors. They ensure a voice for survivors through the implementation of Trauma-informed policies and practices.</p> <p>Additionally, they promote access for survivors to a seamless web of multidisciplinary and comprehensive services to meet their needs in the short and long term. Lastly, trauma services advocate for individual survivors as well as for social, institutional, and legal change.</p>	<p>Trauma Services provides services to all populations including many under-served populations, including elderly, disabled, LGBTQ, immigrant, and limited English proficiency clients.</p>
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**Note: Unless otherwise noted, services are offered regardless of race, gender, gender identity, immigration status, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or any other discriminatory factor**

NR = not reported to VSAB interviewer  
MC = Montgomery County

Service providers were asked, *“What programs and/or services do you offer for victims? How has this changed in the past five years?”* Chart 1 details the types of service categories offered by the providers.

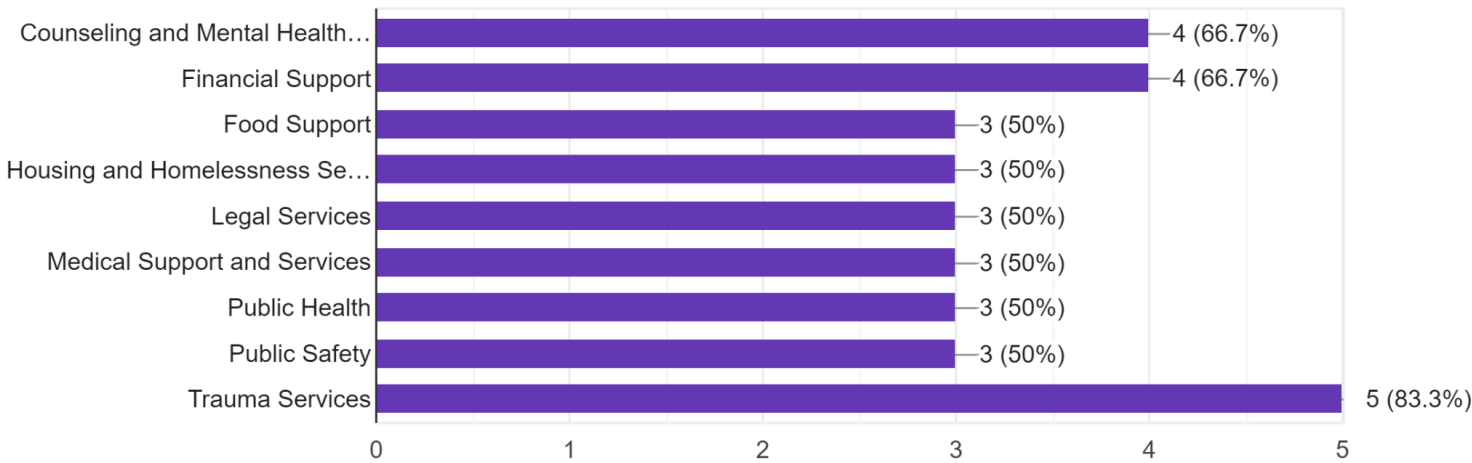


Chart 1: Types of Service Categories Offered By Providers

Below is a summary providing more detail regarding which provider offers what type of service. Answers were simplified and paraphrased as necessary for this report.

Service Provider	Services Provided
<b>Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clinical Team that offers crisis, group and individual long-term therapy services, and utilizes cutting edge, evidence-based strategies to assist people in processing trauma ·</li> <li>● Legal Services Program that provides victims of power-based violence with direct legal representation through protective orders, peace orders, and crime victims’ rights representation</li> <li>● Victims Advocacy Program that offers social support to clients, including but not limited to food, shelter, clothing, safety, and healthcare. JCADA’s Victim Advocacy Team includes our support dog Tahoe, trained at Hero Dogs, Inc.</li> <li>● The AWARE® prevention initiative for youth and young adults in 6th-12th grade to teach young people about healthy relationships and the warning signs of power-based violence ·</li> <li>● Community education through workshops and training and consultation about power-based violence for service providers, communities, schools, clergy and other leaders. JCADA also has an online resource center</li> <li>● JCADA launched Friends of JCADA in 2020, a new community engagement program to support survivors of power-based violence, which includes interactive programs, regular updates, legislative advocacy, and access to learning opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Montgomery County Family Justice Center</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Safety planning</li> <li>● Therapy for adults and children</li> <li>● Career counseling</li> <li>● Basic needs assistance</li> <li>● Legal advice and representation</li> <li>● Immigration legal services</li> <li>● Assistance with criminal cases</li> <li>● Assistance with Protective Orders</li> <li>● Just added in 2022: Forensic medical consultations</li> </ul>
<b>Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington (KCSC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Full-service victim service provider</li> <li>● Provides core services, including case management, translations and interpretation, accompaniment to court and other appointments, and referrals for legal advocacy</li> <li>● Clients who present with clinical issues such as PTSD, depression, or anxiety are immediately referred for mental health intake, assessment, and treatment simultaneous to receipt of ongoing core services</li> <li>● Provides financial literacy education, job readiness services, and referrals to workforce development centers to help them with short-term training and certification programs to set them on a path to truly become self-sufficient</li> <li>● Provide transitional housing options</li> </ul>
<b>Montgomery County Department of Police's Victim Assistance Unit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Crisis support</li> <li>● Referrals for emotional, financial and physical resources; and enhancing victim/witnesses’ safety</li> <li>● Aid in enhancing personal safety for victims/witnesses such as support in the filing of protective orders, enroll in the VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday) automated service to learn of the custody status of defendants, etc.</li> <li>● Assist in employer, creditor, or landlord intervention</li> <li>● Assist in filing for crime victim compensation funds to pay medical bills, replace lost wages, funeral expenses and other associated with the actual crime</li> <li>● Assist in filing for local, county or state programs for long-term counseling, rental or utility assistance, crime scenes clean up, filing for long-term disability, filing for child support and other services that may apply</li> <li>● Court accompaniment for both District and Circuit cases</li> <li>● Assist in having police officers to review home security checks after a crime to enhance personal safety</li> </ul>

Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) & Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) (N = NR)	Legal services devoted exclusively to serving sexual assault survivors
Trauma Services (formerly Abused Persons Program (APP)/Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapists' scope of work includes clinical intake, therapy, and case management</li> <li>• Victim Assistants (VAs) assist crime victims in filing peace and protective orders, hold "court school" to educate victims about what to expect when they come into court, accompany victims during criminal trials, help with victim impact statements and requests for family emergency maintenance, attend show cause hearings for DV (domestic violence) offenders, and connect victims to needed community resources and programs</li> <li>• VAs process Montgomery County Crime Victim Compensation Fund cases and serve as the liaison for the State's Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB) in responding to questions from victims</li> <li>• Staff train and manage volunteers for two programs</li> </ul>

Of the six (6) service providers who provided a response to the Board's questionnaire, all provided some level of demographic information for the victims they serve. That data reflects the following:

**Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA):**

This past fiscal year, JCADA educated **643** teens and adults in Montgomery County.

They served **284** clients in the following departments:

- 68 MoCo Advocacy
- 199 MoCo Clinical
- 138 MoCo Legal

Please note that some clients may have accessed one or more departments. Of the 284 clients in Montgomery County, **243** were either newly enrolled in JCADA services, came off the clinical waitlist, or had called the services line for information and referrals.

Montgomery County represents 1/3 of all JCADA clients.

**Family Justice Center (FJC):**

Gender:

- Females: 91%
- Males: 9%

Race:

- Asian Pacific Islander: 6%
- Black: 28%
- White: 16%
- Hispanic: 37%
- Other: 2%
- Unknown/Unspecified: 11%

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## **Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington (KCSC)**

During the past fiscal year (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023), we provided services to a total of 104 individuals. The demographic information for these individuals is as follows: Age: 15% were between 20-30 years old, 20% were between 30-40 years old, 55% were between 40-55 years old, and 10% were 60 years and older. Gender: 97% were female, and 3% were male. Ethnicity: 70% were Korean, 25% were Chinese, and 5% were from other Asian backgrounds. Income Level: 80% were low-income, and 20% were middle-income. Language Proficiency: 90% had limited English proficiency, and 10% had intermediate English proficiency.

## **Montgomery County Department of Police's Victim Assistance Unit**

The Victim Services Unit serves all populations included in the question. Members of the Unit respond to a large range of populations: gender, vulnerable persons, religious, ethnic groups, and races.

## **Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) & Sexual Assault Legal**

Sexual assault survivors are, in and of themselves, a group that has been underserved. Within that group, several populations served by SALI also meet statutory or traditional definitions of underserved populations.

Data from 2021 and 2022 shows that, 90.85% (685 of the 755) victims SALI served were from underserved communities. During those two years, survivors seeking SALI services were 74.4% non-white (including 23.08% Black/African American and 34.48% Hispanic/Latinx); 24.27% presented with a mental disability, and 10.48% presented with a physical disability. SALI's clients included 27.45% who were immigrant/refugee/asylum seekers, and 23.21% who spoke a language other than English as their primary language. Survivors from rural areas comprised 15.52% of SALI's clients. Youth aged 13-24 were 31.96% of survivors served by SALI. Survivors in all these categories have unique needs and SALI staff have the cultural awareness, humility, and skill to provide all survivors with meaningful access to legal

### **Trauma Services:**

Gender:

Female: 55%

Male: 44%

Other/Unknown: 1%

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Age:

0-2: 0%

3-12: 1%

13-17: 5%

18-59: 87%

60+: 7%

other/Unknown: 0%

Ethnicity:

White: 11%

Black: 30%

Hispanic: 47%

Asian/Pacific Islander: 5%

American Indian/Eskimo/Aleu: 1%

Other/Unknown: 6%

### **Financing of Services**

Victim service providers and organizations throughout Montgomery County were asked about their individual need for financial servicing and support. Out of the six (6) providers five (5) provided responses about funding sources:

- Five (5) service providers utilize federal/state/local grant programs.
- One (1) service provider received funding directly from the County government.
- Two(2) providers receive funding from private or other sources.

Nearly all service providers stated that they believed additional funding would allow them to improve services to victims in the County. Funding to hire full-time experienced staff is a primary need of the providers and organizations interviewed. A significant strain is placed on current employees of understaffed organizations, particularly as crime levels have increased throughout the county. Funding for robust staff salaries is necessary to reduce employee turnover, provide periodic training, and attract employees with distinguished qualifications, particularly as the cost of living in the county has increased with inflation. Indeed, most survey participants specifically stated that additional funding would allow them to hire more FTEs as either staff, legal service providers, or mental health therapists.



Three (3) of the service providers surveyed use volunteers to help fulfill their mission. Volunteers help to ease the strain on full-time employees by offering the experience and knowledge to assist victims of crime in a timely manner. Volunteers throughout Montgomery County are generous with their time and commitment. Several organizations have benefited greatly by maximizing the use of volunteers who are highly qualified. Volunteers also assist the organizations in achieving their overall missions of serving the community's crime victims.

The Board's role is to advocate for the financing necessary so these organizations may function at full capacity. The need for victim provider services and organizations is evident throughout the County.

### Provider Performance

The Board asked service providers if they are pursuing any opportunities and/or initiatives relevant to the victim services they provide and what are the major obstacles or challenges in pursuing them. Table 2 provides this information for the providers who volunteered information. The listed initiative(s) may not be the only opportunity/initiative that the service provider is currently pursuing. Further, failure to include a service provider here does not mean that the service provider is not pursuing any opportunities and/or initiatives.

**Table 2: Current Initiatives of Service Providers who reported this information**

Service Provider	Opportunity/Initiative
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)	Over the past 18 months JCADA has implemented a new, trauma-informed surveying process where staff connect with clients during the time of service to learn about their experience with the agency. The new point in service protocol is not only tailored to accurately reflect the impact of each department but can also be easily customized for each individual client, in real time, to reflect the goals and outcomes they set for themselves. Incorporating the surveys into the regular workflow of each department has increased responses and decreased the additional burden for staff and clients.
Family Justice Center(FJC)	Partnering with Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, Forensic Nursing Unit to offer virtual forensic medical consultations to FJC clients, where the Client is at the FJC and they connect with a Forensic Nurse via Microsoft Teams. Due to the pandemic and due to funding, it was decided to start with a virtual consultation program; the outcomes will be used to seek additional funding for an on-site forensic nurse.
Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington	Over the past year, our program has achieved several key accomplishments. We successfully served approximately 100 victims, maintaining consistent support despite challenges, which reflects our effective outreach and engagement efforts. We expanded our job training initiatives, helping victims gain employable skills and move towards economic self-sufficiency. By hiring additional counselors fluent in Chinese and Korean, we significantly improved the accessibility and quality of our counseling services. Additionally, we strengthened our relationships with community partners and increased awareness about domestic violence,

resulting in a more informed and supportive community. Our data supports these accomplishments, with over 90% of clients reporting high satisfaction with our services, consistent service utilization data, positive outcomes from job training programs, and favorable feedback on the quality and accessibility of our counseling services.

Trauma Services (formerly Abused Persons Program (APP/Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP))

Trauma Services key accomplishments during the past year has been:

- Successfully merging VASAP and APP to one program – Trauma Services.
- Increasing community presence
- Diversifying the workforce to reflect the language and the culture of the community.

### Provider Strengths

Service providers were asked what the strengths of their program are in serving the county’s victim population. Nearly all respondents praised their hard-working and dedicated staff as a strength. Table 3 lists more specific responses from providers who answered this question.

**Table 3: Service Provider Strengths**

Service Provider	Strength(s)
Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington	Domestic violence survivor assistance program, which emphasizes the provision of culturally and linguistically specific services to survivors of domestic violence and addresses the barriers and needs of survivors of domestic violence within the Korean/Chinese community.  KCSC’s ongoing media outreach campaign, distribution of videos, brochures, handbooks, quarterly educational seminars, and a 24-hour DV helpline, all to increase community awareness.
Family Justice Center(FJC)	Collaborative, co-located, multi-disciplinary service model is an innovative one that is spreading all around the world.  On a more micro level, data shows that those who use FJC’s virtual Protective Order hearing program are statistically significantly more likely to follow through with and be granted a Final Protective Order, compared to those who start their process at the courthouse or Commissioners Office.
Montgomery County Department of Police’s Victim Assistance Unit	The Unit is considered to be the best police-based victim services in the state. The Unit believes that they cannot meet the many needs in a victim case. Our strength is that we have worked for years to create strong partnerships with many and varied agencies, (County and state-wide) to work together to meet crime victims’ needs.

**Table 4: Service Provider Challenges**

Service Provider	Challenge(s)
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Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)

JCADA is greatly beholden to government funding, which is nerve wracking, fickle and very time intensive. Fundraising from individuals in our base of the Jewish community has been a challenge throughout the war, as folks focus on the emergency needs in Israel and fighting antisemitism.

As of July 1, 2024, JCADA no longer provides direct representation for protective orders in court and will no longer maintain a separate legal department. Our advocacy team will provide enhanced legal victim advocacy support to survivors, including legal information and referrals to service line callers, and court accompaniment and case management to clinical and waitlist clients. Due to a changing grant landscape, among other challenges, the Board determined that focusing JCADA's limited resources on our Clinical, Advocacy, Education, and Outreach efforts was most in line with JCADA's mission.

Family Justice Center(FJC)

County tax shortfall budget cuts.

Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington

We believe that the primary challenges or threats to our program include funding limitations, which hinder our ability to maintain and expand our services by impacting our capacity to hire additional staff, provide competitive salaries, and sustain comprehensive support programs. Language and cultural barriers persist, as many of our clients have limited English proficiency, making it difficult for them to access services and fully understand available resources. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness and significant stigma surrounding domestic violence within the Korean and Chinese communities, which makes it challenging for victims to seek help and for us to reach those in need. The high demand for our services often exceeds our capacity, resulting in waiting lists and potential delays in providing critical support for victims. Supporting this belief, our annual financial reviews indicate budget constraints that limit program expansion, client surveys highlight ongoing language and cultural barriers, service utilization data shows consistently high demand that surpasses our resources, and community surveys reveal persistent stigma and lack of awareness about domestic violence. This data underscores the need for increased funding, enhanced language support, and ongoing community education to overcome these challenges and better serve our clients.

Trauma Services (formerly Abused Persons Program (APP/Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP))

The challenges and/or threats to our program does not differ from any other community provider. It includes the lack of funding and the limited availability of qualified staff in the job market.

## Provider Needs

The Board's questionnaire also asked service providers how the Victim Services Advisory Board can assist advisory committees and nearly all respondents mentioned the need for increased funding to support additional hiring and/or increased salaries for existing staff.

Beyond more funding to increase staff and salaries, service providers also indicated the following needs:

- Three (3) service providers cited a need for advocacy.
- Two (2) service providers needed community engagement to raise awareness and initiate conversation about domestic violence.

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## Looking Forward

Consistent with the increase in crime rates both in Montgomery County and nationally, the demand for help from HHS Trauma Services has continued at an elevated rate compared to the pre-pandemic period. Specifically, for FY24, the program has received 1,772 service requests, which is a drastic increase from FY23. The severity of cases remains critical, with an increase in homicides, domestic violence, sexual violence, and more reports of strangulations.

Accordingly, the Board continues to advocate for two main policy priorities going forward into FY25 and FY26:

***Priority #1: Ensure HHS Trauma Services Continues To Be Fully Staffed to Meet the Community's Needs***

The investments in the last few years have meaningfully improved HHS Trauma Services, enabling it to operate more efficiently and meet the elevated community needs for trauma and victim services in the post-pandemic period. These investments must be maintained going forward, so the progress that has been made in the last few years is not lost.

Recognizing the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on county and state resources, the Advisory Board remains committed to maintaining the current level of victim assistance staffing—six full-time and one part-time positions. This commitment is reinforced by the sharp rise in demand for victim services during and after the pandemic. In comparing data from 2023 to 2024, we observed an increase of 187 victims served. Additionally, the severity of cases has escalated, with marked increases in homicides, domestic violence, sexual violence, and reports of strangulation.

In short, past budget cuts and an increase in demand for Trauma Services have impacted staff in a myriad of ways. Trauma Services has responded to these changes by hiring more staff and implementing organizational changes that have helped the entire system work more efficiently and effectively. The overall goal of Trauma Services should be, and remains, to meet the needs of our community. Trauma Services has achieved that through a more crisis-focused and timely delivery system of therapy services. VAs are needed to ensure that the needs are met throughout the justice system.

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## **Priority #2: Increase Access to Bridge Housing for DV/IPV Victims**

Funding one-year bridge housing and creating a system for prioritizing DV/IPV victims' access to long-term housing has been a top priority for VSAB since FY2014. Looking forward, that priority remains because these housing needs have not yet been met. The County needs to establish a plan to ensure safe, one-year bridge housing to end homelessness for IPV victims, so they can become self-sufficient survivors. This can be accomplished through several mechanisms:

*First*, the Board supports efforts to ensure that the Betty Ann Krahnke (BAK) shelter is sufficiently staffed. Recent staffing losses at the BAK – apparently driven by a combination of the county's strong job market and the fact that the BAK staff pay has not kept up with the market – has made it nearly impossible for the BAK itself to fully utilize its existing capacity. Ensuring that the BAK operates efficiently and at full capacity is a bare minimum, threshold requirement to ensure that DV/IPV victims in the county have some form of bridge housing, no matter how temporary (or, in the Board's view, not fully sufficient).

*Second*, the Board strongly supports the County's Services to End and Prevent Homelessness working to change existing policy to grant DV/IPV victims increased priority under the Vulnerability Index (VI-SPDAT), a widely recognized tool for determining the need for housing assistance, or any other applicable tools within the county's discretion. This would help close the service gap between those discharged from BAK and those who qualify for county housing assistance.

*Third*, during the last few years, the county was awarded Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care (CoC) bonus funding to expand Rapid Rehousing for IPV victims. However, necessary case management services were not always provided, despite the funds being available for that use. Increased awareness of the grant writing process and qualification requirements would help service providers obtain these funds in the future. Training should be offered to potential providers in a timely manner to prepare them for the HUD application process.

*Fourth*, the Board continues to support methods to provide better transportation options for individuals traveling to and from the Crisis Center. The lack of necessary transportation is often another deterrent to DV/IPV victims establishing their own homes, independent from their abusers.