



MONTGOMERY COUNTY • MARYLAND
**FAMILY JUSTICE
CENTER**

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2020

JULY 1, 2019 – JUNE 30, 2020

With Sincerest Gratitude

*To the elected officials who believed in the mission, to the leaders who forged the way,
to all those who work tirelessly saving lives, and to the community that believes in
supporting those who are suffering: Thank you.*

None of this happens without you.



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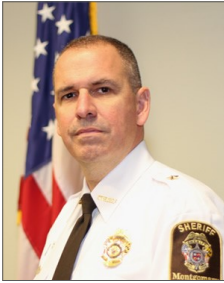
HISTORY

A Family Justice Center is a co-location of agencies and organizations that serve as a “one-stop shop” for domestic violence survivors to receive critical, wrap-around services. The first such center, established in 2002 in San Diego, CA, was hailed as a major step forward in addressing domestic violence in a more collaborative way. In 2006, Montgomery County established the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC), a 19-member board with representatives from county and state agencies as well as the general public, to advise the County Executive on matters pertaining to domestic violence in the county. One of the first recommendations to come out of the DVCC was to create a Family Justice Center in Montgomery County. At that time, a domestic violence survivor would have to go to more than a dozen different locations throughout the county, re-telling and re-living their story each time, in order to receive all of the services available to them. Thanks to major collaborative efforts by numerous county agencies and community non-profits, with the support of the County Executive and County Council, the Montgomery County Family Justice Center opened in the Spring of 2009. Today, this collaborative center, under the auspices of the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, serves as the central hub for domestic violence services in the county, serving more than 1,600 individuals per year. Services are offered at no cost in a safe, family-friendly environment conveniently located in downtown Rockville within walking distance of the Circuit Court, District Court, and public transportation. Today, the Family Justice Center model, now considered a best practice by the U.S. Department of Justice in service delivery to families affected by domestic violence, continues to grow both nationally and internationally.

MISSION

The mission of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center is to promote safety, well-being and healing for victims of intimate partner domestic violence.

From the Desk of Sheriff Darren Popkin



To say that this has been a trying year for Montgomery County, and for our nation, would be an incredible understatement.

While the COVID-19 public health crisis, racial injustice, and political unrest have challenged us in ways that we have never been challenged before, I could not be more proud of the extraordinary staff of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office. The adaptability, courage, and compassion with which they have dutifully served the people of Montgomery County during these trying times is truly outstanding.

The sworn Deputies and the civilian staff in all four of our Divisions have maintained core functions and stayed true to our values and mission despite the uncertainty of the times we live in. And of course, there is the life-saving work being done every day at the Family Justice Center (FJC), where 1,652 victims of domestic violence received critical care this year. As soon as discussions surrounding the potential impacts of COVID-19 began, I spoke to Director Manion about FJC operations.

We agreed that the Center was too important, and the services provided were too critical, to shut down. Immediately, the FJC and its allied agencies worked with our extremely capable technology team to come up with creative solutions to continue providing support to those in need in a safe, socially distant way.

While the challenges we face are far from over, I am confident that the dedicated individuals who work for this Office will continue to adapt to changing needs, lead by example, and always put their best foot forward to serve their community. I am especially proud and appreciative of the efforts of the Client Assistance Specialists, Program Managers, and all staff at the FJC, and I look forward to many more years of safe, compassionate service to victims of family and sexual violence.

Darren M. Popkin, Sheriff

From the Desk of Director Tom Manion



No matter where you go, and no matter who you ask, the past year has been anything but ordinary. As a society, we have had to think

outside the box to solve problems and meet needs; we have had to identify the ways in which we excel and confront the ways in which we are flawed; and we have had to evaluate what our core values are. The Family Justice Center (FJC) is no exception. What I have discovered these last several months is that uncertain times, while difficult, can provide us an opportunity to reflect upon and re-affirm the core values that we strive to uphold in every aspect of our work. I'd like to share those values with you here:

Service: *To assist those suffering from abuse by addressing their safety as well as their long-term wellness.*

Justice: *To hold offenders accountable in the interest of public safety.*

Equity: *To remove barriers to ensure supports and services are available to all who need them, regardless of race, age, language, ethnicity, immigration*

status, religious affiliation, disability, financial means, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Inclusion: *To promote a culture of inclusion and learning among all staff at the Family Justice Center by honoring and celebrating the diversity within our workforce.*

Synergy: *To utilize a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to serve victims of family violence, hold offenders accountable, and educate the community about this important issue.*

In the pages that follow, we highlight the incredible work that has been done at the FJC this past year. I couldn't be more proud of our accomplishments, and can say without question that none of this would be possible without the support and efforts of our allied agencies. Law enforcement, legal, clinical, faith-based, government, and non-profit, this work takes all of us, and I am grateful to be a part of it.

Tom Manion, Director

FJC ALLIED AGENCIES

Anchor Fund

Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project

Ayuda

CareerCatchers

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Washington

Chesapeake Counseling Associates, LLC

Court Watch Montgomery

DVS Legal Services

ElderSAFE Center, Charles E. Smith Life Communities

Family Services, Inc.

Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center

House of Ruth Maryland

Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse

Korean Community Services Center

Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Montgomery College

Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation

Montgomery County Police Department

Montgomery County Sheriff's Office

Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office

Muslim Community Center Medical Clinic

Panera Bread

Pro Bono Counseling Project

Tree House Child Advocacy Center of Montgomery County

Women Who Care Ministries, Inc.

FJC Volunteer & Internship Program

During FY20, the FJC Volunteer and Internship Program was excited to accept **sixteen** volunteers and interns who completed essential tasks and provided critical support with day-to-day activities and special projects. They also had the opportunity to participate in community outreach and education by assisting with the DVCC Choose Respect Initiative and facilitating teen dating violence prevention workshops for teens in Montgomery County. Our volunteers and interns completed a total of **five hundred fifty-eight** hours of service this year!



Internship Program

The Internship Program offers college students an opportunity to work with a variety of FJC staff, apply their academic skills and knowledge in the workplace, and explore career options.

This year, our Interns came from the following colleges and universities:

George Washington University

Liberty University

Montgomery College

University of Maryland Baltimore County

University of Maryland College Park

University of Virginia

If you or someone you know is interested in the FJC Volunteer and Internship Program, please e-mail mcfcvip@gmail.com

FY20 Interns' Majors and Minors:

Biological Anthropology

Criminal Justice

Economics

Family Science

French

Government and Politics

Mental Health

Psychology

Public Policy

Spanish



SERVICE

1,652 Clients Served

221 Children referred to the Safe Start Program

Clients by Age

Age 17 and Younger	1%
Age 18-25	19%
Age 26-35	35%
Age 36-45	27%
Age 46-55	12%
Age 56-65	5%
Age 65 and Older	1%

Clients by Race/Ethnicity

Asian/Pacific Islander	5%
Black/African American	33%
Hispanic/Latino	31%
White/Caucasian	21%
Other	3%
Unknown	7%

Clients by Gender

FEMALE	91%
MALE	9%

EQUITY

164 Safe taxi rides provided through the Ride to Safety Program

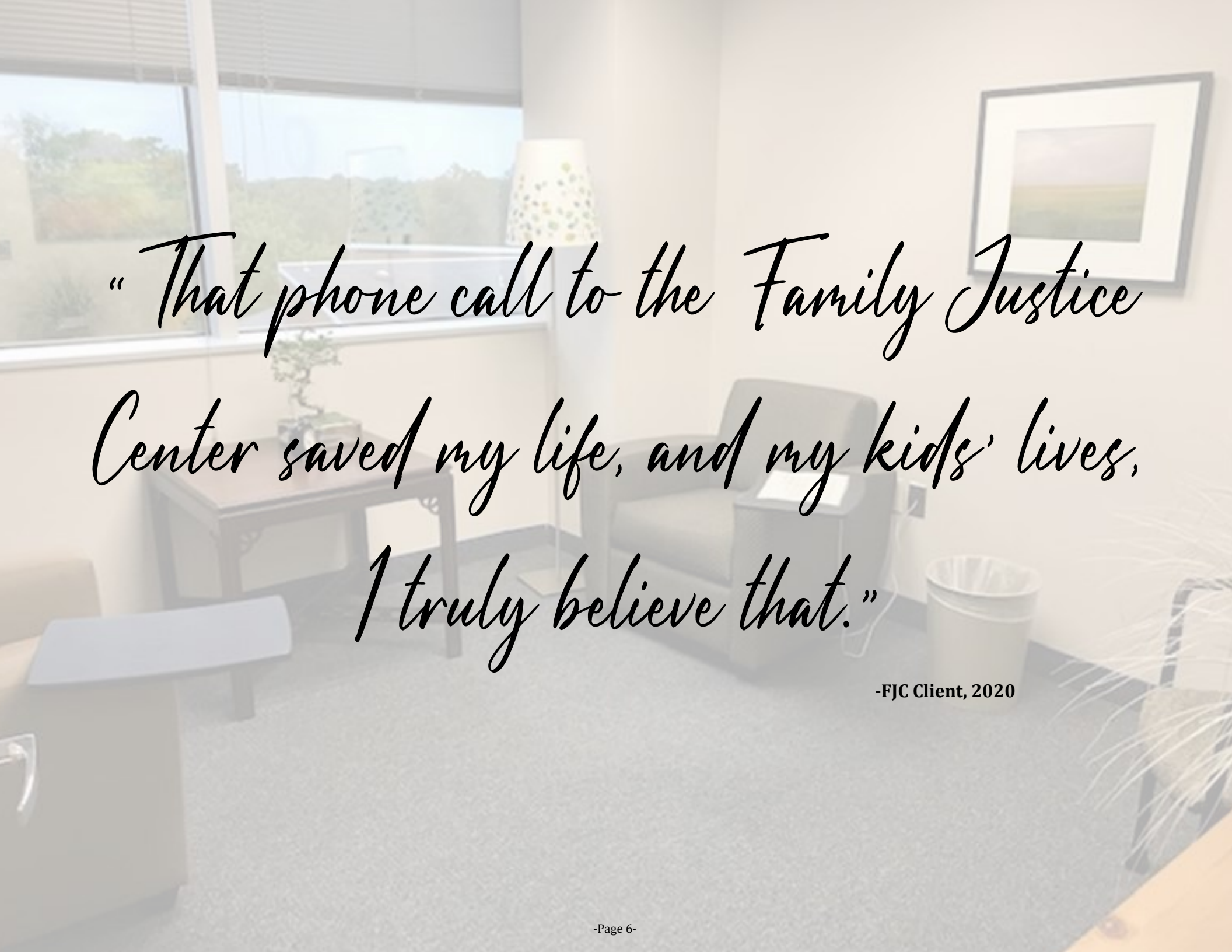
\$1786 In Emergency Gift Card Assistance for Groceries, Transportation, and Other Basic Needs

Many thanks to all of our multi-lingual staff at the Family Justice Center and to VOIANCE, our language line interpretation service, for allowing us to provide services in 20 different languages this year!

Amharic	English	Latvian	Spanish
Arabic	Farsi	Mandarin	Thai
Bengali	French	Pashto	Urdu
Cantonese	Haitian Creole	Portuguese	Vietnamese
Dari	Korean	Russian	Yoruba

SYNERGY: The FJC Allied Agencies work collaboratively using a multi-disciplinary and client-centered approach to serve victims of domestic violence in Montgomery County Maryland.





“That phone call to the Family Justice Center saved my life, and my kids’ lives, I truly believe that.”

-FJC Client, 2020

Domestic Violence and COVID-19

Thomas Manion

Montgomery County Family Justice Center



**Do you feel unsafe at home?
Are you concerned about a neighbor or loved one?
Free help is available.**

**¿Se siente inseguro en su casa?
¿Está preocupado por su vecino o ser querido?
Hay ayuda gratuita disponible.**

The Montgomery County Family Justice Center: 240-773-0444
safe@montgomerycountymd.gov
The Montgomery County Crisis Center: 240-777-4000 (24 hours/horas)



www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/

In March 2020, Montgomery County along with the entire nation began implementing stay-at-home orders, and people were asked to isolate at home, social distance from one another, and work from home if possible. These were recommendations to help stop the spread of COVID-19, which was infecting so many people at such a fast rate. While the lockdown orders were critical to help communities stay healthy and safe, unfortunately, for those living with abusive partners, home is the most dangerous place to be. Work, school, running errands and hobbies are often the only escape victims have to be away from their abuser. While isolating at home, abusers now have more opportunities to exert power and control. They may use the COVID-19 pandemic to their advantage to further control the victim, such as by limiting or restricting access to phones or computers, withholding necessary items such as hand sanitizer or disinfectants, or by spreading misinformation about COVID-19 to further frighten the victim. Victims who would otherwise seek protection with their parents may be scared to do so if their parents are elderly or immuno-compromised. In addition, the natural stressors of financial uncertainty and how long the COVID-19 pandemic will last put additional stress on households and can increase violence and abuse in the home.

The Montgomery County Family Justice Center (FJC), which has remained open throughout the entire public health crisis, was able to quickly put new protocols in place to

ensure the health and safety of the staff and clients who access services. All staff began a rotational telework schedule, and mandatory face coverings, routine cleaning of all high touch areas in the Center throughout the day, and thorough disinfecting of all Client interview rooms are just a few examples of the FJC response to the pandemic. A dedicated safe e-mail account was also set up: safe@montgomerycountymd.gov. This new e-mail address enables victims to discretely connect with the FJC for help when making a phone call isn't safe. Additionally, Montgomery County agencies including the County Executive's Office, Sheriff's Office, State's Attorney's Office, Police Department, and Commission for Women created a Family Violence Awareness and Prevention Campaign in response to the crisis. Over 87,000 resource cards have been distributed throughout the county and ads were posted on Facebook, Twitter and on Ride On buses, letting the community know that the FJC is still open and accessible for those who need help.

Initially, during the months of April and May, the FJC observed a 20% decrease in Clients seeking services. This was likely due to lockdown orders, and the fear and uncertainty surrounding leaving one's home during that time. By June, the number of Clients served rebounded back to pre-COVID levels. Since the beginning of the pandemic, FJC staff have also observed a significant increase in the severity of cases, with many involving strangulation and/or firearms or other weapons. The FJC and all of its allied agencies are prepared to continue serving victims of domestic abuse in a safe, socially distant manner for the duration of this crisis.

Left: One of the social media graphics used as part of the Montgomery County Family Violence Awareness and Prevention Campaign at the start of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

"I just couldn't leave them behind:"

Pets and Domestic Violence

For victims of domestic abuse, there are so many barriers to leaving. Fear, isolation, financial concerns, homelessness, and medical concerns can all disrupt a safe exit plan. One such reason that we see over and over again at the Family Justice Center (FJC) is a survivor's concern or fear over what will happen to their pets if they leave. Often times, domestic violence shelters or friends and family are willing to take the victim in, but are unable to house their pet. Thus, the victim stays in the dangerous household to ensure the pet is safe from abuse or neglect.

This year, the Montgomery County FJC partnered with the Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center to develop a specialized version of the existing SafeKeep Program, which houses pets in times of crisis. This enhanced version of the program, specially designed to accommodate domestic violence victims, allows pets to stay safely at the Animal Services Center while the survivor secures future housing. In addition to creating this specialized version SafeKeep Program, staff from the Montgomery County FJC and the

Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center participated in a joint training on the well-established link between domestic violence and animal cruelty, and how to recognize and respond to animal abuse in violent domestic situations. The training was led by Chris Brosan, Chief of Animal Control in Loudoun County, VA. Thank you, Chief Brosnan for the informative presentation, and many thanks to our friends at the Animal Services and Adoption Center for all you have done and continue to do on behalf of victims of family violence!



The Montgomery County FJC has a new look!

Reaching our tenth year of operation in 2019 was such an important milestone for the FJC. As we closed the book on our first decade of service, we realized the time was ripe to update our branding in a way that honored the past but also recognized how far we've come and our vision for the future.

As you can see in our new logo (pictured right) the seal featuring Lady Justice has been replaced by three simple petals. The petals all join together at a central point, illustrating the way we work together across agencies and across public and private sectors to assist those in need. The colors of the petals represent domestic violence awareness (purple), child abuse awareness (blue), and sexual assault awareness (teal). And finally, the shining light in the center represents the hope we aim to provide to those who wish to live free from abuse.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY • MARYLAND
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CENTER**

Check out our newly revamped website!



www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/

We are so excited to announce the launch of our newly designed FJC website!

Some of the great new features include:

- Safety exit button – an ideal element for websites that contain sensitive information such as those geared towards victims of family violence. This feature gives the user the ability to leave the site quickly, if needed, to keep sensitive information hidden from other viewers.
- FJC Allied Agencies list with embedded links – this allows the user to not only see the amazing agencies that make up the FJC, but also allows easy access to each agency's website.
- Resources pages – these pages include information about domestic violence and family violence during COVID-19, and resources available for victims in the County.

Every year, the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation collects donations for those who receive services at the FJC. Many Clients have had to leave their homes to stay with friends or at a shelter and do not have basic supplies such as toiletries, diapers, wipes, winter coats, gloves, scarves and school supplies. When they are at the FJC, they are able to take these emergency supplies home with them. Children who accompany their parents leave with a brand-new stuffed animal and a brand-new book or toy to bring some comfort to them during a scary time. These donations come from a variety of generous individuals, corporations, organizations, agencies and student groups. We are so appreciative of all of the incredible community support!

Montgomery County
**Family Justice
Center Foundation**



For more information on how to get involved,
please visit <https://mcfjcfoundation.org/>.



American Sewing Guild - Rockville Pinups

Bar-T

Bright Horizons - Rockville

Burtonsville Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary

Cold Spring Elementary School

Covenant United Methodist Church

Imagination Library

Kids in Need Distributors

Montgomery Planning

Norbeck Neptune Swim Team

Quince Orchard HS

Skanska USA Building, Inc

Snowden Farm Elementary School

Top Ladies of Distinction, Patuxent River Chapter

And Countless Individual donors!

MONTGOMERY COUNTY FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

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TEL: 240.773.0444

WWW.MONTGOMERYCOUNTYMD.GOV/FJC