

transitionsNews

TRANSITIONS OF PA OFFERING SAFE AND SUPERVISED VISITATIONS

By Hillary Olivares, Family Justice Center Coordinator

Since 2019, the Fairl Family Justice Center (FJC) has facilitated 517 supervised visitations, which started via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions. We have had the opportunity to help 61 families and had the pleasure of meeting 84 kids. It's amazing to see that more than half of our families have successfully reached their goals, whether it was family-planned or court-ordered. Just over this past holiday season, we were able to see the ability for a family to file for a modification right before December 25, which resulted in parties getting shared legal custody. The child started services at the FJC when they were just 2 years old, and now that they are 4, they've successfully ended their time at FJC. The program is free of charge to clients and provides monitored visitations. FJC Coordinator Olivares shared "It's amazing that the parent was able to be a part of the kiddo's growth. Providing these services ensured they didn't miss out on important milestones. Now, they can spend time together outside of the FJC and continue building their bond in their own safe place." Not every case is the same, but the ability to ensure a safe place to rebuild relationships for all parties is essential to the parent-child bond.

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FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO, MAE-LING KRAZ:

FUTURE CUTS TO THE VICTIM OF CRIME ACT FUNDING THREATEN CRUCIAL SERVICES

In 2021, Congress passed the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 to fix the long-term challenge of decreased deposits into the Crime Victims Fund (CVF). This structural change was, and still is, a critical first step for the long-term health of the CVF, and in the short term, it has produced much-needed additional dollars. Unfortunately, it has not generated the level of funding that was expected, and it has

not resolved the CVF's historically low balance.

The Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) fund balance has decreased 92% from \$13B in 2017 to a mere \$1.019B in 2023. This has resulted in Pennsylvania and all other states receiving significant decreases in their federal VOCA awards, which subsequently impacts the amount of VOCA dollars available for future funding to victim service organizations. The below-average deposits into the CVF place the projected fiscal year 2024 awards at \$700 million below fiscal year 2023 amounts, and 2023 is already the lowest funding level year since 2014. This federal budget projects a 41% decrease in federal awards to states.

Transitions of PA and like-funded victim services providers in Pennsylvania know our programs are receiving a 5% funding cut in fiscal year 2024. Although 5% may not seem like a large amount, to many victim service organizations, including Transitions, Victim of Crime Act funds make up the largest funding stream, and any cut ultimately hurts victims and survivors.

Further, the President's FY24 budget and the FY24 House and Senate Commerce, Justice, Science, and Justice agencies appropriations bills is a 40% cut compared to FY23. The devastating impact of this cut will fall hardest on the smallest programs, particularly programs in rural communities, low-income communities, and Communities of Color. Millions of people nationwide will lose access to lifesaving and life-sustaining services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and other crimes. Further proposed cuts will force programs to cut staff and services or close entirely, leaving victims without the essential support they need to heal, stay safe, and seek justice.

As the federal budget negotiations continue, a third continuing resolution was signed extending last fiscal year's spending levels until March 8, 2024. The National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators is working with national partners and VOCA stakeholders to respectfully urge Congress to provide bridge funding to reinforce the Crime Victims Fund.

Victim service providers are working diligently with private funders and state and local lawmakers to secure funds to address increased needs and provide a buffer if VOCA grants are cut. However, even with these stopgaps, programs simply cannot absorb cuts of this magnitude. They are facing what can only be described as a catastrophe.

We need your help. Transitions of PA is imploring individuals throughout our community to reach out to our members of Congress and share with them what potential cuts to VOCA will mean for programs like ours, survivors in our communities, survivors across the state, and the nation. Please share your concerns with members of Congress today!

THE THREE TYPES OF CIVIL PROTECTION ORDER

by Heather Britton, Legal Advocacy Coordinator

Transitions' legal advocates spend most of their time helping clients obtain Protection from Abuse orders (PFAs), but there are two other types of civil protection orders with which we assist: Sexual Violence Protection Orders (SVPOs) and Protection from Intimidation orders (PFIs).

Protection from Abuse (PFA) orders apply to cases where one or more of the following acts occur between family or related household members, or current or former spouses or intimate partners:

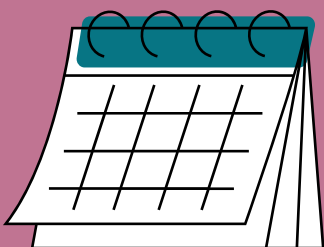
- Attempting to cause, or intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing bodily injury, including rape or other forms of sexual assault;
- Placing another in reasonable fear of imminent bodily injury, including through threats;
- Falsely imprisoning someone (e.g. tying up, locking in a room, taking car keys, or otherwise restricting one's ability to move about freely); or
- Stalking (following or harassing in a manner that causes fear).

PFAs are not appropriate in cases where abuse occurs between unrelated household members, such as roommates.

Sexual Violence Protection Orders (SVPO) apply to cases of sexual violence where the victim and perpetrator have never had a family, household, or intimate partner relationship. Some examples of sexual violence perpetrators who may be subject to SVPOs are strangers, acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers, and friends.

Protection from Intimidation (PFI) orders apply to cases of stalking and harassment where the victim is under the age of 18 and the perpetrator is over 18. Again, the victim and perpetrator cannot have had a family, household, or intimate partner relationship, as those relationships fall under the purview of a PFA.

Adults and emancipated minors may file for their own protection orders. Parents, adult household members, and legal guardians, including court-appointed guardians ad litem, may file on behalf of minor children. Legal guardians may also file on behalf of incapacitated adults. Finally, victims do not have to report perpetrators' actions to police to qualify for a protection order.



February was Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Teen dating violence is a significant and prevalent issue, with studies indicating that at least one in twelve adolescents experience various forms of abuse within their dating relationships. It can occur across genders and sexual orientations, highlighting the need for increased awareness, education, and support to address and prevent this widespread problem.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)

By Heather Shnyder, Health Systems Training Specialists

As April approaches, it marks the beginning of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), a critical time to raise consciousness about the prevalence of sexual violence in our communities and allows us to express support to those it has affected. Sexual assault remains a widespread issue, affecting the lives of individuals regardless of age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status.

SAAM serves as a platform to break the silence surrounding sexual violence and challenge societal norms that perpetuate it. By promoting conversations, education, and awareness events, SAAM aims to inform, debunk myths, dispel stigmas, and promote a culture of consent and respect.

Transitions of PA has planned various events for April. One of these events is the Teal Day of Action, during which staff members will distribute teal ribbons and encourage groups to share photos of themselves wearing teal. They will also participate in PCAR's 30 days of SAAM challenge on our social media platforms. In addition, our Education Specialists will be providing programs to the local youth community centers and schools, and we will observe RAINN Day, participate in a "Chalk Walk" and Take Back the Night event with students from Susquehanna University to demonstrate to their peers that we stand with them in the fight against sexual violence.

Our key event will include a presentation on online safety issues for parents by a Special Agent from the FBI to be held at the Lewisburg High School Auditorium, on Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at 6:30 pm. We will also be observing Denim Day, on April 24, 2024, to show our support for sexual assault survivors and victims, alongside various other activities and happenings that will be listed on our website and social media outlets.

SAAM serves as a reminder of our shared responsibility to create a safer and more inclusive world for everyone. We can contribute to building a culture of respect, dignity, and empowerment by standing in solidarity with survivors and actively working towards prevention and intervention. Let us come together this April and beyond to amplify the voices of survivors, break down systems of oppression, and promote thriving communities where all individuals can live free from the fear of sexual violence and abuse. By working together, we have the power to make a difference.



Survivor Corner:

"Transitions of PA has been a Godsend for my child and myself. It has proven to be exactly what you would expect...A program to help victims of domestic violence to survive! I have found helpful tools, guidance, and compassion. These tools include financial planning, legal guidance, and even helped make our holidays magical. It has given me the strength to escape a bad situation and help me in improving our lives. I am so grateful for everything this program offers. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank everyone involved in our journey."

New Staff Spotlight:



Jessica Morales **Bilingual Counselor/Advocate**

Last month, Jessica Morales began serving as the Bilingual Advocate in the Counseling Department. She has an educational background in Early Childhood Education and Family Studies. She is originally from Peru and is a Spanish native speaker. While she belongs to the Latino community, she also had the opportunity to interact, learn, and build a good relationship with families coming from different parts of the world while she was raising her first child in an international student family housing in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Prior to joining Transitions of PA, she served young and school-age children in non-traditional school settings. She is excited about her new role as a Bilingual Advocate and is getting ready to welcome and serve anyone who needs to be heard to and emotionally supported.

"I'm very happy to create a safe space for all survivors who seek our help. I'm excited to guide them and make them feel they are not alone in their fight."



Stephanie Balliet **Snyder County Legal Advocate**

In January 2024, Stephanie Balliet began serving as the Snyder County Legal Advocate at Transitions of PA. Before that, she served survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault as a Medical/Shelter Advocate at a peer agency. In her new position, Stephanie provides legal advocacy services, acts as an agency resource person on legal issues, and provides systems advocacy and direct services to victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other serious crimes in Snyder County. Stephanie participates in the Snyder County STOP Team. She also accompanies victims in criminal proceedings against abusers and develops relationships with law enforcement, court officials, judges, and other local professionals and advocates to address the clients' concerns.

"Being able to serve survivors at the same agency that served me 20 years ago is an opportunity that I am very grateful for."



Community Spotlight- USOA Ms. Pennsylvania 2024

Tatiana Rodriguez is a 33-year-old social sciences graduate, born in Hoboken, NJ into a Puerto Rican and Cuban family. She moved to Pennsylvania when she was 4 and was introduced to pageants. Tatiana is raising awareness of Human Trafficking by telling her own story of survival and through her work in her dessert studio.

Upcoming Events:



Transitions of PA will participate in Raise the Region 2024! **Raise the Region will be held on March 13th and 14th.**

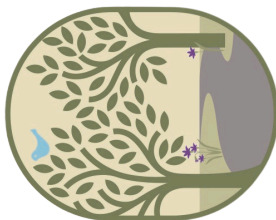
Visit our donation page by clicking here: **[Transitions of PA](#)**

This year, we are fundraising to offset the 5% cuts to VOCA (Victims of Crimes Act) funding by our government. A 5% cut in our funding means fewer dollars to urgently and comprehensively serve our clients in need. We hope to count on our supporters to make a donation through Raise the Region.

Speaking of Raise the Region, we will host a fundraising **Happy Hour on Thursday, March 14, 4-6 pm, at 120 South 3rd Street in Lewisburg.**

We hope you will join us!
RSVP to outreach@transitionsofpa.org

SAVE THE DATE
for our ANNUAL CHARITY AUCTION
JUNE 5, 2024



Save the Date for our Annual Charity Auction!

This year our theme is A Path Forward. This is a reference to the safe path we hope to provide for our clients through comprehensive services, as well as, our path forward as we grow as an organization. Please plan to join us for an enjoyable evening of Live & Silent Auctions, Dessert Dash, Raffles, and more!

Wednesday, June 5, 2024

5:30 pm
Evert Dining Room
Susquehanna University

Save These Dates!

March 13-14, 2024 – Raise the Region – Please support Transitions of PA.

March 14, 2024, 4-6 pm – Raise the Region Happy Hour – RSVP to outreach@transitionsofpa.org.

March 16, 2024, 7:30pm & March 17, 2024, 3:00pm - See Transitions at Susquehanna Valley Chorale: AMENDMENT - RIGHTING OUR WRONGS - Celebrating Women's Empowerment and Resilience at Stretansky Hall, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove - Tickets: SVCMUSIC.ORG or at the door.

April 2, 2024 - SAAM DAY OF ACTION (Sexual Assault Awareness Month) – Wear Teal.

April 14, 2024 – RAINN Day – An opportunity for college students to demonstrate to their peers that they are an ally in the fight against sexual violence.

April 16, 2024, at 6:30 pm - Empowering Families: FBI Agent Unveils Essential Digital Safety Strategies, presented at Lewisburg Area High School Auditorium. Open to the public.

April 24, 2024, Denim Day – Stand in solidarity with sexual assault victims and survivors.

April 27, 2024 - Come visit the Transitions table at the Lewisburg Arts Festival.

June 5, 2024 – Transitions of PA Annual Auction.

Transitions of PA is committed to ending all forms of violence and oppression by providing safe, survivor-centered resources, prevention, education, and mobilization for social change within our communities.