



FCASV: Our Impact

2019-2020
State Fiscal Year
in Review



Inside

Overview Letter

Program initiatives,
accomplishments, and plans
for the future



OVERVIEW

The Florida Council Against Sexual Violence (FCASV), a nonprofit, is the state's sexual assault coalition and certifies the 31 sexual assault programs in Florida. Our work spans the spectrum from providing technical assistance to allied professionals who respond to sexual violence victims, to representing survivors in civil legal matters, to advocating for legislative changes that would have material impacts on the lives of victims.

Despite COVID-19 challenges and restrictions, certified sexual assault programs around the state continued to provide services via new methods like **telehealth counseling sessions**, **Zoom support groups**, and **virtual outreach and awareness activities**. At the Council level, FCASV pivoted to providing trainings virtually, representing clients in legal matters over online court sessions, and advocating for our service providers' needs in supporting victims during a pandemic.

Featured throughout this report are images of survivor masks and letters. National Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) takes place every April to raise awareness about the impacts of sexual violence on individuals, families, and communities. The 2019 SAAM project invited survivors from around the state to share the masks they wear as a result of their experiences. This past April, FCASV hosted a virtual gallery to showcase support and connection during a time of social distancing and isolation. These are items made by survivors to provide support for others and to help community members understand their lived experiences.

The next few pages provide brief summaries and highlights of FCASV's work during **July 2019 – June 2020**. If you'd like to learn more about our work, please visit www.fcasv.org. As always, we are happy to set up a meeting to talk about vital services for victims and survivors in Florida. Please don't hesitate to call our office at **(850) 297-2000**.

Jennifer L. Dritt, LCSW
Executive Director
Florida Council Against Sexual Violence



More than 115 masks were received by FCASV from survivors around the state. This is a display of some of the masks in the shape of the sexual violence awareness ribbon.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE)

FCASV developed the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program to provide advanced assistance to certified sexual assault programs and specialized training for medical professionals conducting evidentiary exams of sexual assault and rape victims. SANEs are trained with specific focus on the medical, psychological, and forensic examination of victims.

As the demand for SANE training requests have grown from programs and individual healthcare professionals, FCASV has increased the number of 40 Hour Adult/Adolescent SANE trainings and Advanced Topic Area trainings for providers across the state. However, the FY 2019-2020 SANE coordination and education was heavily impacted by the onset of COVID-19. Once in-person trainings were not possible, FCASV shifted to offering virtual webinars on advanced topic areas. Between July 2019 and February 2020, 65 health professionals attended an in-person 40 Hour SANE training and 123 professionals received advanced topic training virtually during FY 19-20.

Recognizing the need to make 40 Hour SANE trainings more accessible, in 2019, the Council partnered with a web-based training development contractor to blend the 40 Hour Adult/Adolescent SANE program into an in-person and web-based training. This expansion is targeted to be completed by the end of 2021.

FCASV's interdisciplinary work group is currently developing a statewide sexual assault response team protocol, for adaptation by the Office of the Attorney General, set for release in September of 2021.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

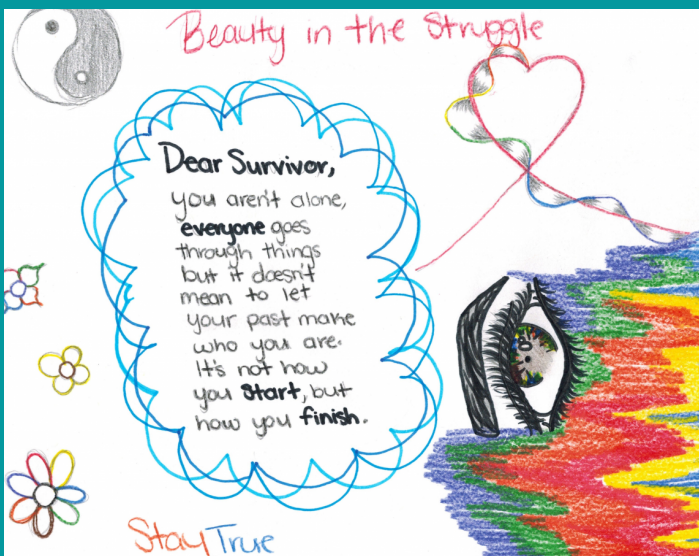
Since 2015, FCASV has provided no-cost civil legal representation for sexual assault victims through funds from the Office on Violence Against Women. Though the need is great, FCASV's team of attorneys is one of the few legal resources available to survivors of sexual violence in the state.

In the past five years, the legal services program has grown from one full-time staff attorney and the Director of Advocacy working from two separate office spaces, to a team comprised of FCASV's Associate Director, a Supervising Attorney, a full-time staff attorney, and a Statewide Victim Services Coordinator with dedicated office space in Tampa. During this time, the legal services team has provided victim-centered legal services and safety planning to hundreds of survivors.

One of the main goals is to provide holistic assistance to victims of sexual assault. Survivors first interact with the Statewide Victim Services Coordinator, a trained advocate, for intake and support during the legal process. The legal team's effectiveness is not just measured by the number of cases litigated in court but also by the improvement of survivors' lives, safety, and growth in their healing, though, in a six-month period alone, 75 clients received legal assistance during FY 19-20. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, the legal team continues representing clients over video conferencing court sessions and virtual and phone check-ins.

The team assists clients with obtaining injunctions for protection against perpetrators, terminating parental rights of perpetrators who assaulted their victims, and filing administrative complaints to hold licensed professionals accountable in their respective areas of practice. A remaining area of need is for children, the most vulnerable population, who are unable to obtain legal representation on their own. FCASV receives regular requests monthly for children in need of representation, for whom FCASV can only provide referrals due to federal funding restrictions.

In addition to providing direct legal services to individual clients, FCASV's Associate Director works on improving the systemic response to all survivors through policy and legislative advocacy, including looking toward high impact litigation opportunities, and filing of amicus briefs and providing support for other legal services providers.



KEYS PROJECT

Largely geographically separated from the rest of the state, rural Monroe County, comprising the Florida Keys, is one of two counties in Florida that does not have a local certified sexual assault program. To meet the needs of victims and survivors in this area, FCASV has provided a therapist to exclusively offer counseling services in Monroe County for more than 15 years.

Recognizing the need to expand services in the Keys, in 2017, FCASV hired a SART coordinator/advocate to strengthen and revitalize coordinated community responses and contracted with a SANE to provide forensic exams.

Since 2017, Monroe County has had one on-call SANE to conduct forensic exams across the entire region. In FY 19-20, FCASV staff focused on offering additional trainings and recruiting new SANEs. Due to these increased efforts, orientation is currently taking place and available on-call SANEs will increase considerably to three trained professionals. This will allow for long-term sustainment of forensic exam services conducted by trained, trauma informed SANEs in the Keys.

In the past fiscal year, vital collaboration between the SART Coordinator and the community has advanced outcomes for survivors and the Monroe community. The county has seen an increase in cases moving forward in prosecution. With FCASV's advocacy, there has been a better satisfaction with the criminal justice process for both the survivor and for system partners. FCASV's work also led to a partnership with the County Health Department, ensuring HIV prophylaxis is available to all survivors at no cost to the victims. Because of ongoing, open conversations among community partners, a workgroup will be developing a county-wide protocol on sexual assault response.

RURAL

Florida's rural communities are distinct and unique, and service provisions to survivors in these areas must reflect that. Understanding these populations have varied needs, FCASV partners with two local sexual assault programs that serve specific rural communities in Florida.

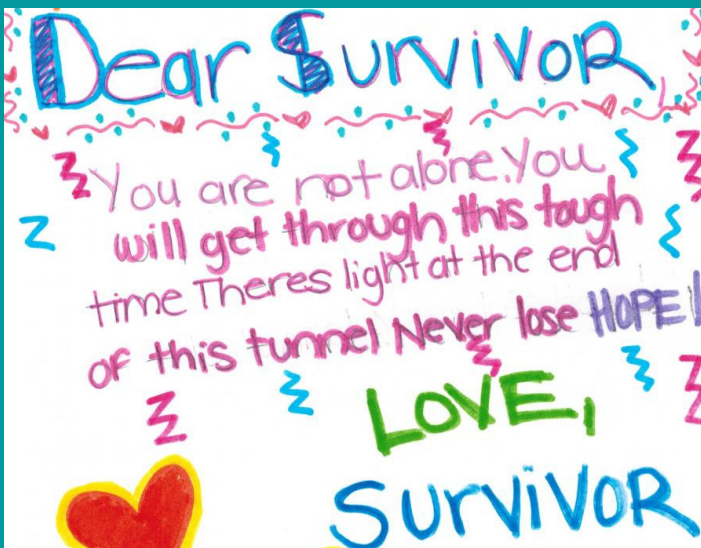
Abuse Counseling & Treatment (ACT) services rural Glades and Hendry counties, and Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center (SPARCC) serves rural Desoto county. The current project focuses on providing culturally specific advocacy and crisis intervention services to Latinx/Hispanic victims, including remote and mobile access to these services. Advocates in these areas also ensure incarcerated survivors receive support through individual counseling, support groups, and connection to services upon community reintroduction.

During the 19-20 fiscal year, ACT and SPARCC served a combined total of 161 sexual assault and child sexual abuse primary and secondary survivors as well as offering 463 support group and individual counseling sessions. The two programs also participated in a total of 151 community education events. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, community building transitioned to online practices including virtual art exercises, online safety guidance, and information on topics like teens and sexting.

Prior to these changes in outreach events, advocates engaged in various activities during the fall and spring of fiscal year 2019-2020. The "Not in My Town" campaign was launched to bring awareness to Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking in the state.

Due to successful advocacy for service availability to incarcerated survivors, a rural jail partner began providing clients with access to telephone counseling, recognizing the impact of these services to victims.

Moving forward, FCASV aims to provide further access to specialized mental health training for advocates and community professionals, improving their engagement with rural individuals. Also on tap for this fiscal year are Latinx comic books. The stories are based on real survivor experiences and are a mixture of bystander intervention, social services, and survivor resilience and empowerment. The comics also focus on community responsibility toward sexual assault and will be used in outreach to rural Latinx communities.



LAW ENFORCEMENT

Human trafficking and sexual exploitation are unlike any other crime because, often, the victim is unaware that they have been exploited. Traffickers target youth and historically marginalized populations making sure that the victim is totally dependent on them for survival.

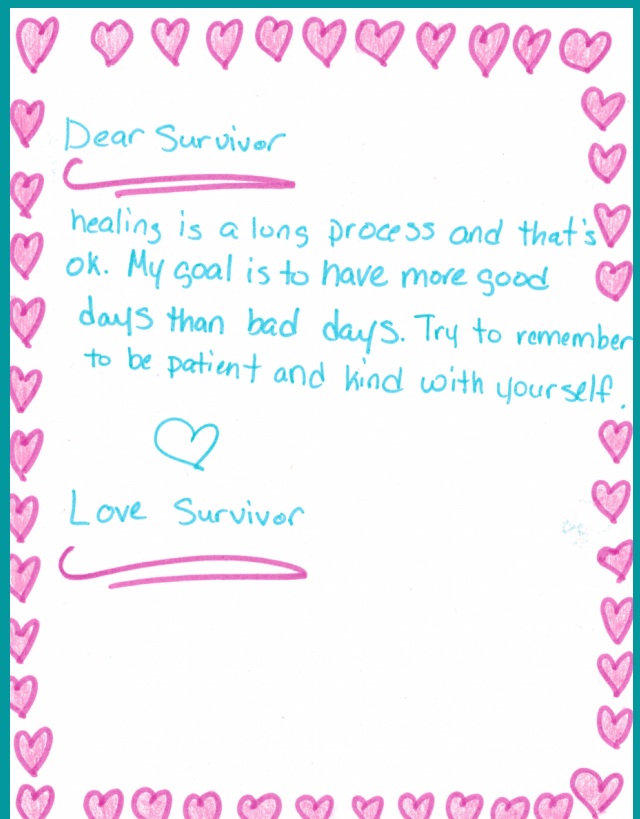
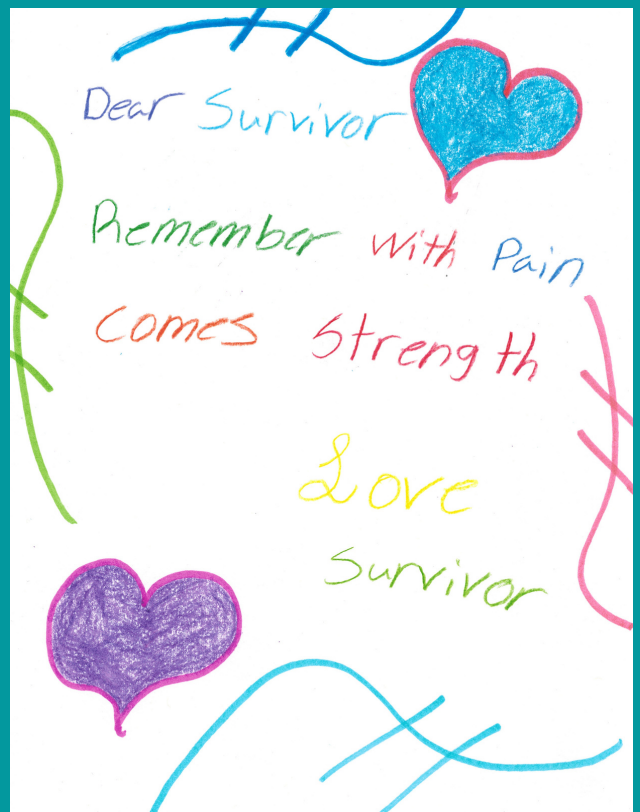
Recognizing these realities for survivors, FCASV has partnered with Tallahassee's Special Victims Unit and human trafficking victim advocates to develop a comprehensive High-Risk Victims (HRV) task force training to help walk participants through creating one in their communities.

HRVs connect social services, grassroots organizations, child welfare professionals, public defenders, and law enforcement with the purpose of creating a safety net and individualized exit plan for survivors, with an emphasis on abused youth. The resulting support can help victims begin their path of healing and visualizing a meaningful future.

As travel restrictions halted the five-city intensive trauma informed response trainings for law enforcement, FCASV conducted two online trainings, making them available to agencies in all of Florida. A total of 127 law enforcement officials, State Attorney's Office professionals, and victim advocates received training based on the science of how trauma affects the brain and victim behavior as well as interviewing techniques developed by military investigators.

An additional virtual training, for the 2019-2020 FY, included a collaboration with the Coalition for Independent Living Options and Sandy Pines of Palm Beach. The virtual half-day summit trained individuals on promoting survivors' rights to self-determination, restoring the autonomy they lost after assaults or through involuntary exams, and how misconceptions can impact the way a survivor's trauma is interpreted.

To further educate and engage with Florida's communities, FCASV is currently partnering with Florida State University's Public Interest Law Center to develop a Human Trafficking Tool Kit for attorneys and individuals serving in legal roles. Through this partnership, the Council is also creating a podcast that centers on the facets of human trafficking and the roles of law enforcement. Production is set to begin in Winter 2020.



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