



Florida Council Against
Sexual Violence

Our Impact

2020-2021 State Fiscal Year in Review



Overview

Dear Supporters,

This annual report highlights some of the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence's (FCASV's) work over a twelve-month period that began just months after Governor DeSantis declared a State of Emergency due to COVID-19 and ended two months after he directed the State to prepare to resume non-emergency operations. State Fiscal Year (SFY) 20-21 was far from just another year.

With a few exceptions, FCASV's operations were conducted using web-based platforms in a remote and virtual environment. While our contract management and oversight functions remained unchanged, much of our technical assistance and trainings for certified sexual assault programs, allied professionals, and first responders, were provided virtually. Public awareness events were advertised and offered through social media. Even the Biennial Statewide Training Summit and mini summit for law enforcement were held via Zoom. Direct services—representing survivors in civil legal matters and providing advocacy, trauma-focused therapy, and medical forensic exams in the Florida Keys—were provided in-person and virtually, depending upon the survivor's preference.

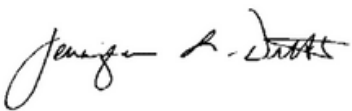
We are excited to share highlights of our work during SFY 20-21. We hope you enjoy the photos from featured events and activities, such as Denim Day and our *Healing Through Ink* online project, both of which took place during National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. We are incredibly proud of these highlights, as well as the work that is a backdrop to this report—the daily, weekly, and monthly support and guidance FCASV provided Florida's thirty-one (31) certified sexual assault programs as they adjusted sexual assault response and service delivery models to meet survivors' needs during a pandemic that is a testament to the commitment and compassion of our staff.

This year has demanded more creative and different engagement with our vision of a world free of sexual violence in which we all ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect for their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual integrity.

We know that vision is attainable—if we work together. Won't you join us?

If you would like to learn more about our projects and work, visit www.fcasv.org. Please do not hesitate to call our office at (850) 297-2000 if you would like to discuss lifesaving services for victims and survivors.

Sincerely,



Jennifer L. Dritt, LCSW
Executive Director



Program Highlights





SANE PROGRAM



Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) are medical professionals with specialized training and certification to conduct medical forensic exams using a trauma-informed and victim-centered approach. The use of SANEs increases the probability of obtaining probative DNA evidence while minimizing trauma for survivors. Despite the important role of these healthcare professionals, Florida has a shortage. In order to recruit and promote the use of SANEs, FCASV runs a SANE Program that provides trainings, technical assistance, and best practice guidance for the state.

Between November of 2020 and May of 2021, nine SANE trainings were held, six virtual and three in person. **Forty-three nursing** professionals attended an in-person 40-Hour SANE training and **180** professionals received advanced topic training.

Creating the option for nurses to take a portion of the course online, four hours of the 40-Hour Adult/Adolescent SANE training were converted to an interactive web-based format. The hybrid 40-hour (four virtual and 36 in-person) training kick-off date is anticipated for April 2022.

In addition to providing SANE trainings and technical assistance, FCASV also advocates for system changes. This March, after years of advocacy, the Office of the Attorney General formally increased the medical forensic exam reimbursement rate from \$500 to \$1,000 per exam to entities conducting the assessments.

To enhance inclusive services for victims of sexual assault, FCASV purchased accessible medical examination tables for **seven sexual assault centers** with SANE programs. The tables allow for easier transfer from wheelchair to table and the height and leg support adjustments assist those who have difficulty with mobility and/or stability.

Looking to provide a more complete picture of valuable SANE services statewide, FCASV, in partnership with End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI), developed a pilot data collection survey tool. Sexual assault programs biannually report on medical forensic exam advocacy accompaniments and the provision of SANE services. This data will be instrumental in discussing the delivery of medical care to victims statewide and advocating for improved services for survivors.

KEYS PROJECT

Geographically isolated from the rest of Florida, rural Monroe County is one of only two counties in the state that does not have a certified sexual assault program. In order to meet the needs of victims in this area, FCASV employs a therapist, a SART Coordinator/Advocate, and contracts with a SANE to provide services exclusively in the Keys.

Prior to this project, survivors in Monroe County had no option other than turning to law enforcement when gathering information about their options and rights, and often did not have continued support throughout their recovery process. Through this funding, victims have access to a **privileged community advocate** for wrap-around services, regardless of their decision to report to law enforcement or not.

FCASV's contracted SANE is the only one providing medical forensic exams in the Keys. The number of forensic exams conducted in Monroe County **almost doubled** from 2019 to 2020. Working toward sustainability, the training of an additional SANE is underway and recruitment of registered nurses to become SANE-trained is ongoing.

Through the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Coordinator/Advocate's work, Monroe County's **first SART** was established several years ago, and meetings conducted in July 2020 – June 2021 helped to facilitate communication between community partners on enhancing the county-wide response to sexual assault.

**Forensic exams
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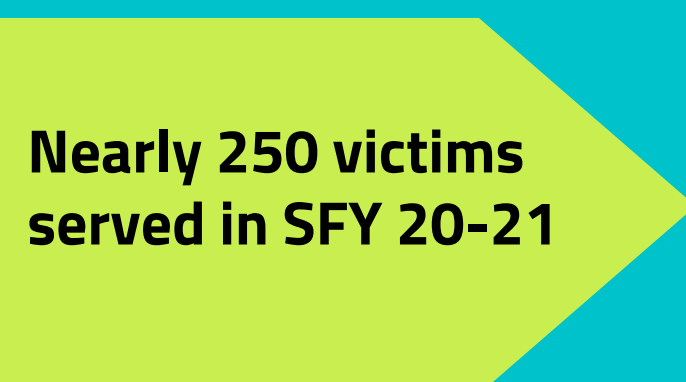
SEXUAL VIOLENCE LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

Though the need is great, little legal expertise in representing survivors of sexual violence other than that provided by FCASV is available at either the state or local levels. As the statewide expert and sole legal service provider working exclusively and holistically with survivors of sexual violence, FCASV's legal team provides direct representation, counsel and advice, and legal referrals. From July 2020 – June 2021, our team served nearly **250 victims**.

The **free civil legal assistance** provided by FCASV helps survivors seeking essential needs such as safety protections like injunctions, employment and educational accommodations, protection of their identities from release, and maintaining stable housing. As our legal team provides support and assistance in these matters, victims and survivors can focus on their emotional health and well-being.

Due to federal grant limitations, FCASV is restricted in its ability to provide legal services to child victims **under the age of 11**. The legal team is working to expand services, including to minors younger than age 11 and in matters that are unallowable under federal grants, who often need services in the wake of victimization. As part of the expansion, we are working to connect with pro bono service providers to educate them on representing victims of sexual violence to enhance the representation they can provide.

This past year, FCASV established a legal internship program with Florida State University of Law and Ave Maria School of Law. This internship experience educates aspiring lawyers on best practices in serving survivors and exposes them to real casework.



**Nearly 250 victims
served in SFY 20-21**





RURAL PROJECT

Serving rural communities presents a host of challenges and in addressing some of these barriers to access, FCASV partners with two sexual assault programs serving rural counties. The project focuses on providing **culturally-specific services** to Latinx/Hispanic populations and migrant farmworker communities. Abuse Counseling & Treatment (ACT) serves Glades and Hendry counties, and Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center (SPARCC) serves DeSoto County.

In rural communities, individuals may be geographically isolated and lack transportation which impacts their ability to access services. Partner programs utilize **mobile advocacy sites** that move to places like service hubs and community spots, so survivors do not forego advocacy services because of distance or lack of transportation.

In order to improve conditions for survivors who come in contact with a variety of systems throughout their healing and recovery, the rural project provides training to community professionals and responders. In one year, FCASV and partners conducted **50 trainings** with a total of **814** professionals trained.

Due to recent systems advocacy, SPARCC successfully re-established protocols with a local hospital in DeSoto County so that sexual assault advocates are called out when a victim presents at the emergency room. In Glades and Hendry, ACT worked with county jails to setup individual Zoom sessions for incarcerated individuals, resulting in **90 sessions** over this past SFY.

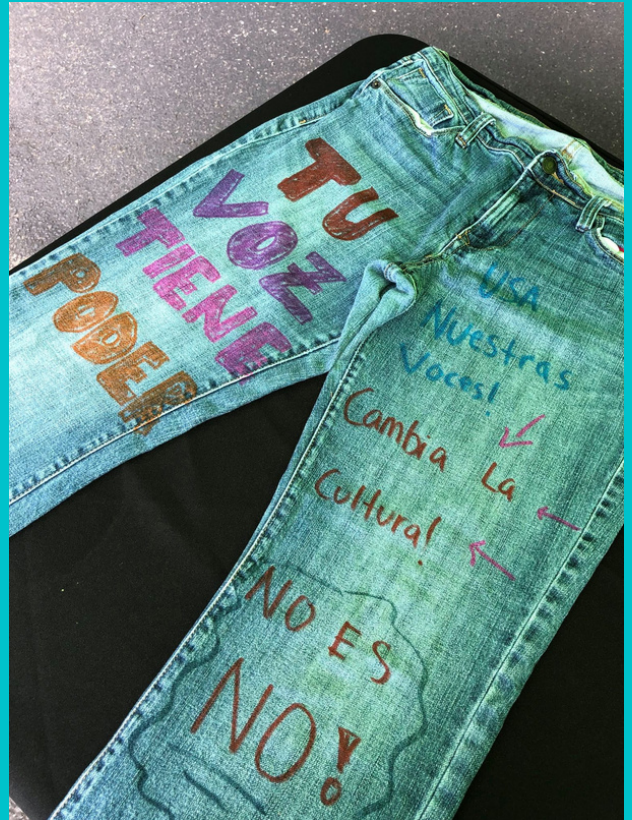
**90 virtual sessions
for incarcerated
survivors in
SFY 20-21**



CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM PROJECT

To ensure victims receive the best possible response, FCASV works with various system partners to enhance service provision to survivors, including the criminal legal system. Through law enforcement grant funding provided during SFY 20-21, FCASV staffed **two law enforcement positions** (one each in Gainesville and Palm Beach County) working with survivors of sexual violence.

Thirty law enforcement officers from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSCO) received training on trauma-informed investigations. FCASV trainers will be returning to JSCO for part two, a train-the-trainer event. This two-step training process supports the agency's goal of having its entire Sheriff's Department trained in trauma-informed practices. Tools learned in these trainings help establish a more effective relationship between law enforcement and survivors while also increasing the likelihood of offenders being held accountable.



In order to reach more officers, this past fiscal year also saw FCASV's development of a **four-part webinar series** on trauma-informed investigations. The series teaches participants about the neurobiology of trauma, how trauma can affect investigations and victim interviews, and how to complete this police work from a trauma-informed lens. The knowledge gained by law enforcement in trauma-informed training and the subsequent use in the field help to improve victims' overall experience with the investigation.

Offering a national space for sexual assault coalitions to discuss law enforcement work, FCASV hosted bimonthly calls with discussions centered on reimagining policing, accountability, and safety. These conversations continue with topics like transformative justice, restorative justice, investing funds in placing advocates within law enforcement departments, and implicit bias training.



PREVENTION PROJECT

In February, FCASV collaborated with the Florida Department of Health to begin administration of the Centers for Disease Control's Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program. After a competitive application process, more than **30 communities** in Florida were awarded RPE funding, totaling **23 projects**.

The RPE program funds projects that focus on preventing first-time occurrences of sexual violence and minimizing harm in instances of victimization. The prevention strategies aim to promote social norms that protect against violence; provide opportunities, both economic and social, to empower and support girls and women; create protective environments; and support victims and survivors to lessen harm. Some of the prevention projects that have been developed under this grant include a 12-week Social Justice Mentorship Program for at-risk girls, bystander intervention training for local hospitality sectors, and an initiative to distribute date rape drug test coasters to local bars and nightclubs. FCASV hired a Prevention Specialist in 2021 to lead this crucial work.

During SFY 20-21, FCASV joined the State Health Improvement Plan initiative to ensure sexual violence prevention remains centered in Florida's health response.

TRAININGS & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

As the state's expert on sexual violence issues, FCASV fields technical assistance requests from all systems interacting with survivors – healthcare, law enforcement, legal, legislative, and advocacy and recovery service providers. More than **3,000 units** of technical assistance were provided by staff during SFY 20-21. Our staff receive requests to provide trainings, serve on statewide groups, and participate in events. This included panelist engagements for events with topics like serving LGBTQ+ survivors and promoting racial equity. FCASV participates in the Statewide Human Trafficking Steering Committee for Safe Shelters project, and our Community Consultant Panel began work on building capacity for responding to survivors with disabilities.

During July 2020 – June 2021, in addition to project area trainings, FCASV staff hosted and/or conducted **four additional virtual trainings** on advanced topics for certified sexual assault program staff. Topics included Baker Act and Sexual Violence, Serving Incarcerated Survivors, Working with Human Trafficking Survivors, and Title IX Regulations. Staff members also wrote **six guidance documents** for program staff on a variety of topics like medical forensic exam advocacy within hospital settings and helpline response.





VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Due to COVID restrictions and safety concerns, FCASV hosted its first-ever virtual Summit with more than 200 people in attendance September 30th – October 2nd. The Biennial Summit brings together Florida’s sexual violence responders and state and national experts in the field. The two-and-a-half day training conference offers best practices and techniques used in serving survivors.

The 2020 Summit offered colleagues a chance to connect and network as well as participate in workshops with topics like **advanced therapy modalities**, ways to engage with **underserved** survivor populations, and new **community partnership** considerations. The virtual Summit finished with a lively film panel discussion on *The Rape of Recy Taylor*. Our guest panelists included: Dr. Na’Imah Ford, a professor and subject matter expert on women and gender studies, Takisha Richardson, a victim rights attorney, and Danielle McGuire, an award-winning author and historian. For those interested in hearing a piece of the powerful and insightful conversation, please visit the “Awareness and Outreach” page on www.fcasv.org. We hope you will consider joining us at **FCASV’s June 2022** Summit in **Orlando, FL**.



Keynote Speaker:
Teresa Stafford,
Cleveland Rape
Crisis Center



Keynote Speaker:
State Representative
Anna Eskamani



AWARENESS & OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



ADVOCACY DAY

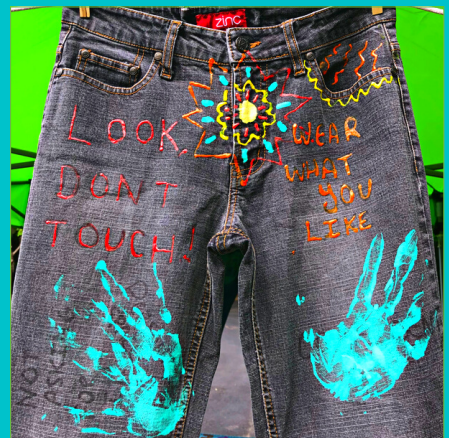
In March, FCASV hosted our first Virtual Advocacy Day. This was a time for sexual assault program staff and experienced advocates to share the impacts and risk factors that survivors face every day. Legislators and their staff connected with those working to develop more equitable, trauma-informed communities, while learning about issues directly impacting survivors. Senator Janet Cruz served as the Advocacy Day 2021 keynote speaker, motivating attendees with inspirational words and a glimpse of the work being done to shift the culture and attitudes towards sexual violence in our state.



Keynote Speaker: Senator Janet Cruz

SAAM 2021

National Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) takes place every April and this year, FCASV's campaign was "I AM". The theme recognized and honored the variability in victims' and survivors' backgrounds, healing processes and outlets, and represented individuals choosing how they want to present and identify themselves to the world.



HEALING THROUGH INK

To highlight the independent expression of victims and survivors, FCASV hosted a virtual gallery throughout SAAM inviting individuals to send in chosen body art that represented their stories. Many survivors use non-traditional methods of healing, such as tattoos, as a way to regain control of their bodies. This gallery served as a reminder that every survivor's canvas is unique to their journey.



DENIM DAY & SAAM PROCLAMATION

Spotlighting Denim Day during SAAM, FCASV hosted a display that featured denim from survivors across the state. Supporters and legislative leaders in Florida joined in by sporting their denim as visible signs of protest against sexual violence and to help spread the message that clothing does not equal consent.

Further honoring Denim Day, Senator Janet Cruz read FCASV's Sexual Assault Awareness Month proclamation on the floor, which recognized the importance of this month and the work being done across Florida to support survivors' recoveries.

Visit our "Awareness & Outreach" page on www.fcasv.org for pictures and to learn more about these activities.



Senator
Audrey Gibson



Senator
Lori Berman

FILM SCREENING & PANEL DISCUSSION

FCASV hosted a film screening and panel discussion examining *You Belong to Me: Sex, Race and Murder in the South*, which chronicles the abuse and controversial trial of Florida survivor Ruby McCollum. Florida House leaders Representative Tracie Davis and Representative Michele Rayner along with Professor Na'Imah Ford discussed elements of the film ranging from gender roles and generational trauma of Black women in the criminal legal system to the continued criminalization of victims.



Film Panelist:
Representative
Tracie Davis



Film Panelist:
Representative
Michele Rayner



Film Panelist:
Na'Imah Ford, Ph.D.

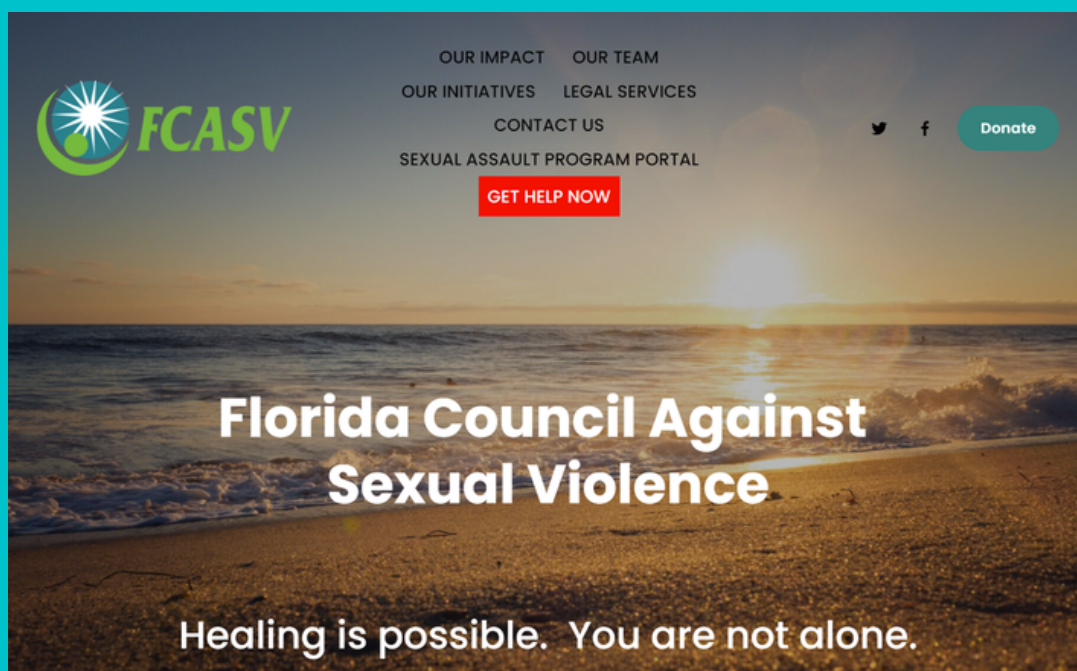


WEBSITE LAUNCH

Closing out Sexual Assault Awareness Month, FCASV launched its new website on April 30th. The website, www.fcasv.org, features a calendar with training and event opportunities, a “Get Help Now” section assisting survivors in finding information on their local sexual assault programs, and a “Legal Services” page in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole that provides survivors with information on FCASV’s free legal assistance.

For those looking to learn more about our initiatives and work, you can visit pages like our “News” section for up-to-date information on partnerships, statements, and public policy news releases. The “Awareness & Outreach” page allows visitors to follow along with our work raising awareness about sexual violence, its impacts, and the needs of survivors across the state.

If you would like to stay informed about FCASV’s work, please use the sign-up form on the bottom of our homepage to receive our quarterly newsletter, announcements, and opportunities.





FLORIDA COUNCIL AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE

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