

Victim Rights Law Center

Leading a New Response to Sexual Violence



BACKGROUND

An act of sexual violence can devastate and often derail an individual's life. The impact is long-lasting — months, years, even a lifetime. Imagine all of your life's necessities — housing, employment, education, privacy, safety, and, in some cases, citizenship — put in jeopardy because of sexual violence. While therapists, medical professionals, and the criminal justice system can provide invaluable support, they cannot restore some of life's most immediate, basic needs.

In response, the Victim Rights Law Center (VRLC) was established in 2003 as the first nonprofit law center in the nation solely dedicated to serving the legal needs of rape and sexual assault victims. Through free legal services, our staff attorneys and volunteer attorneys help restore victims' lives after experiencing sexual violence, ensuring that survivors may stay in school; protecting their privileged and confidential mental health, medical and education records; preserving their employment; maintaining safe housing; securing their immigration status; and swiftly accessing victim compensation and other benefits.

We are more than happy to answer any questions about the VRLC and the legal support our organization provides to victims of sexual violence.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

During the pandemic our five physical offices are closed, but VRLC attorneys are remotely providing legal representation in multiple areas of law for survivors of rape and sexual assault.

While home is a safe place for many of us, it is not a sanctuary for everyone. Eight out of 10 sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone the victim knows. That means that many victims are currently trapped with their abusers until the stay-at-home restrictions are fully lifted. Many of these victims, in fact, are children. We know children are being sexually abused during quarantine. To make matters worse, they don't have access to their normal safety nets, like teachers and guidance counselors. Schools are closed for the year and next year is unknown. Many camps and activities have been canceled for the summer.

Sexual assault victims are isolated from their friends and their extended family – those they trust and turn to for help. During this time of uncertainty, VRLC attorneys are working on the front lines ensuring that survivors are safe, they can stay in their homes during the pandemic, and return to their schools and their jobs, when the time is right.

But we cannot do it alone. As we stand by the side of the survivors, we need you to stand by the VRLC. Our organization is currently looking for donations to support our emergency legal fund, the Be The Light campaign. The proceeds will help make an impact in the lives of sexual assault survivors right now when they need it most.

FACT SHEET

Where is the VRLC located?

The VRLC has five offices located in Massachusetts and Oregon.

What is our mission?

The VRLC's mission is to provide legal representation to victims of rape and sexual assault to help rebuild their lives; and to promote a national movement committed to seeking justice for every rape and sexual assault victim. VRLC's legal services are free.

How is the VRLC serving survivors during COVID-19?

Although the VRLC's physical offices are closed, our attorneys are representing sexual assault survivors remotely in virtual restraining order hearings, protecting survivors' privacy, preventing evictions, stabilizing employment, securing immigration statuses, and providing criminal justice advocacy. We are also training pro bono attorneys so that survivors will have access to additional legal support. Our national training programs are providing training, support, and mentorship for attorneys and advocates across the country to help survivors in their communities navigate their legal needs throughout the pandemic.

How can you help?

You can make an impact in the lives of sexual assault survivors today by donating to the VRLC's emergency legal fund, Be The Light campaign. Your donation will provide free legal assistance to survivors during the pandemic when they need your support the most. Our goal is to raise \$200,000 to help survivors.

Why donate to the VRLC?

The VRLC is the first and the leader in providing legal assistance to sexual assault survivors. For 16 years we have focused on ensuring survivors have a free trauma-informed attorney by their side to address the myriad of legal needs post-assault. The pandemic has created an even more complex world for survivors and VRLC attorneys are critical to helping survivors navigate those urgent legal issues. Because when it comes to sexual violence there is no flattening of the curve.

KEY MESSAGES

“Victims are currently trapped with their abusers until the stay-at-home restrictions are fully lifted.”

For some of us home is a safe place, so even though we are isolated from our communities, we are still safe. But for many, home is not a sanctuary. **Eight out of 10 sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone the victim knows.** That means that many victims are currently trapped with their abusers until the stay-at-home restrictions are lifted.

“Sexual assault victims are isolated from their friends and their extended family—those they trust and turn to for help.”

The majority of sexual assault victims are between the ages of 12-24. **For all victims under the age of 18, 66% are between 12-17 and 34% are under the age of 12.** We know children are being sexually abused during quarantine. To make matters worse, they don't have access to their normal safety nets, like teachers and guidance counselors. Schools are closed for the year. Camps and activities are canceled for the summer. Sexual assault victims are isolated from their friends and their extended family – those they trust and turn to for help.

“As we stand by the side of survivors, we need you to stand by the VRLC.”

VRLC attorneys are working on the front lines ensuring that survivors are safe, they can stay in their homes during the pandemic, and return to their schools and their jobs, when the time is right. But we cannot do it alone. As we stand by the side of the survivors, we need you to stand by the VRLC. If you are looking to make an impact, to help children and survivors now, donate to our emergency legal fund, Be The Light campaign. **Because when it comes to sexual violence there is no flattening of the curve.**

NEWS RELEASE

Sexual Violence Continues During COVID-19 Quarantine - Victims Struggle to Reach Out for Help, Reports Victim Rights Law Center

Lockdown Contributing to Sexual Violence; Emergency Legal Fund Launched to Address Anticipated Surge

Boston, Mass., July 21, 2020 - While home is a safe place for many of us, experts reveal that sexual violence is a hidden consequence of quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chaos and instability resulting from this crisis make women and children exponentially more vulnerable right now. The Victim Rights Law Center ([VRLC](#)) reported today on the impact of victims being quarantined with their abusers. To meet the financial demands that accompany providing free legal services to sexual assault survivors, the VRLC launched an Emergency Fund, [Be The Light](#), in an effort to raise \$200,000 to support victims in need of help.

From January 2020 through May 2020, the VRLC saw a 65 percent decrease in the number of sexual assault victims reaching out for legal assistance. June data shows an increase of 30 percent in the number of victims reaching out for legal assistance, and experts anticipate a continued surge of victims needing critical services as the quarantine restrictions are fully lifted.

“There is no flattening of the curve when it comes to sexual violence. Reports of child sexual abuse have dropped since the COVID-19 pandemic started because young sexual assault victims are currently isolated from their teachers, school nurses, friends and extended family -- those they turn to for help,” says [Stacy Malone](#), Esq., Executive Director of the VRLC. “This year, we anticipate a surge in demand for our services all at once and our challenge will be to replace the level of fundraising we usually achieve at in-person events like our annual Shining Star Gala. With in-person events postponed indefinitely, our call for donations is even more urgent than ever.”

During this pandemic, sexual assault survivors are isolated and lack the ability and privacy to access help. Research shows that:

- One in 10 children have experienced sexual abuse before the age of 10
- 93% of child sexual abuse victims know their perpetrator
- 34% of all victims are under 12 and 66% are between ages 12 and 17
- Only 2% of rapists go to jail

When stay-at-home restrictions fully lift, a surge of victims will come forward for help all at once. The \$200,000 that the VRLC is seeking to raise will help victims secure emergency restraining orders, ensure stabilized housing, assist with a safe return to school for children, and to address the myriad of legal needs following sexual violence.

The VRLC provides free, trauma-informed legal representation to victims of rape and sexual assault to help stabilize their safety, privacy, housing, education, employment and immigration status. The VRLC provides free civil legal assistance to over 800 sexual assault survivors annually in Massachusetts and Oregon, along with nationwide training for attorneys.

For more information about the Victim Rights Law Center visit victimrights.org.

About VRLC

The Victim Rights Law Center (VRLC) was founded in 2003 to fill a critical void in services for sexual assault victims. It is the first nonprofit law center in the country solely dedicated to serving the critical legal needs of sexual assault victims. The organization's mission is to provide free, trauma-informed civil legal representation to victims of rape and sexual assault to help rebuild their lives; and to promote a national movement committed to seeking justice for every rape and sexual assault victim. VRLC attorneys also lend their expertise to provide guidance to state and federal agencies, and local and national legislators on gender-based violence.

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SURVIVOR STORIES

Kamal

Kamal is a 9-year-old who was sexually abused by a neighbor. He was afraid to leave his home out of fear of being assaulted again. His VRLC attorney secured a restraining order against the neighbor. As quarantine restrictions have begun to lift, Kamal feels safe riding his bike around the neighborhood again.

Sofia

Sofia was raped on campus her freshman year. When she reported the assault to the university, she had a hard time engaging in their process. During COVID-19, a VRLC attorney represented her in the virtual campus disciplinary hearing and the perpetrator was expelled from school.

Iyana

During quarantine, Iyana was raped by a roommate. She immediately became homeless after the assault but was wrongfully deemed ineligible for housing aid. Her VRLC attorney was able to secure her housing. Iyana went from living on the streets during the pandemic to having her own apartment.

BIOS

STACY MALONE, ESQ.

Executive Director

Victim Rights Law Center

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/stacy-malone-a199b011/>

Stacy Malone, Executive Director, at the Victim Rights Law Center (VRLC), leads the first nonprofit law center in the nation solely dedicated to serving the needs of rape and sexual assault victims. In her role, Ms. Malone oversees the organization's strategic direction, focuses on the growing legal services and increasing nationally of attorneys and advocates working with victims of sexual violence.

Since joining the VRLC as a pro bono attorney in 2004, Ms. Malone has held various positions of increasing responsibility within the organization. Malone initially joined the VRLC as a pro bono attorney and provided free legal services to survivors for 7 years. Malone also served on the Board of Directors for 6 years, followed by serving on staff as Co-Administrator of the VRLC. In 2010 Malone was appointed as the Executive Director and continues to dedicate herself to helping victims rebuild their lives.

Ms. Malone holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Journalism from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a J.D. Law Degree from Boston University School of Law.

INFOGRAPHICS

**BE THE LIGHT:
FUND LEGAL SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS**

VICTIM RIGHTS LAW CENTER

THERE IS NO FLATTENING OF THE CURVE WHEN IT COMES TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE...

VRLC ATTORNEYS ARE ON THE INVISIBLE FRONTLINE ENSURING THE SAFETY OF SURVIVORS

WHEN RESTRICTIONS LIFT

WILL COME FORWARD FOR HELP ALL AT ONCE

DUE TO THE PANDEMIC, SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS NEED THESE LEGAL SERVICES NOW

EMERGENCY RESTRAINING ORDERS

EMERGENCY HOUSING SUPPORT

SAFE RETURNS TO SCHOOL

As we stand by the side of survivors, we ask YOU to stand with the VRLC.

WE CANNOT DO IT ALONE.

Donate and learn more:
www.victimrights.org/BeTheLight

**BE THE LIGHT:
FUND LEGAL SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS**

VICTIM RIGHTS LAW CENTER

1 in 10 in the U.S. **CHILDREN** HAVE EXPERIENCED **SEXUAL ABUSE** BEFORE THE AGE OF 18

93%

OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS KNOW THE PERPETRATOR

AGES OF ALL THE VICTIMS Under 18 in the U.S.

34%

UNDER 12

66%

12 TO 17

Closed schools mean children have little access to help

Young survivors need legal support

The majority of all sexual assault victims are between the ages of:

12
and
24

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