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Big Legal Victory: California Supreme Court Says Courts Must Now Provide Court Reporters for Low-Income People

After more than 3 years, [Jameson v. Desta](#) was decided by the California Supreme Court on July 5, in favor of the party [FVAP](#) supported as friend-of-the-court. It struck down San Diego's policy that eliminated court reporters from civil cases because the policy contained no exception for low-income people who had received waivers of court fees. [FVAP's](#) amicus brief was joined by 30 DV and family law organizations.

Under this case, all counties statewide are **required to provide court reporters** to low-income people who request one, free of charge. 30 out of 58 California counties had eliminated court reporters in family law cases. This is a sweeping decision that we believe will have far-reaching impacts statewide for all low-income litigants, including survivors of DV, many of whom are low-income.

This ruling is important because **court reporters transcribe** what is said during a hearing or trial into written form, and not having a court reporter often means a litigant cannot succeed in appealing an unfavorable trial court decision. Also, the availability of a court reporter's transcript can help if a litigant wants to modify a trial court decision at a later date, **such as a custody or visitation decision**.

Read media coverage of the case quoting [Executive Director, Erin Smith here](#) and [here](#).

We are so excited for this win and look forward to how this will support survivors in the appeals process going forward.

FVAP's Housing & Employment Justice Project Secures Housing for DV Survivors

[FVAP's Housing & Employment Justice Project](#), launched this year, is already having a big impact in California. This spring, East Los Angeles Women's Center contacted [FVAP](#) to help a domestic violence survivor who was facing homelessness. The landlord had informed the survivor that her lease would not be renewed, but it turned out the landlord did not give enough notice required by law. [FVAP](#) helped secure legal representation for the survivor to get her an additional 2 months before eviction, and with this additional time, **the survivor was able to secure housing and avoid homelessness**.

[FVAP](#) helped another domestic violence survivor who was homeless and was approved for low-income housing, but had her application suspended when it became apparent she had a previous eviction. Because the eviction was due to domestic violence, [FVAP](#) was able to help East Los Angeles Women's Center and the survivor fight the suspension by drafting a letter to the landlord explaining the survivor's rights under the Violence Against Women Act and the Fair Housing Act. After receiving the survivor's

letter, the landlord approved the application, and she was able to secure affordable housing and avoid homelessness. **FVAP is using template letters, toolkits, and “know your rights” materials like this letter to expand the capacity of the field statewide to help DV survivors avoid homelessness.**

To learn more about FVAP's Housing & Employment Justice Project, visit our [project announcement article](#).

Jeff Sessions Turns Back Clock on Domestic Violence Survivors Seeking Asylum

On June 11, we were horrified to learn of Attorney General Jeff Sessions's decision to reverse an immigration appellate court ruling that granted asylum to a woman from El Salvador, who said that she fled her home country due to ongoing abuse at the hands of her husband. The woman, who has been referred to as A-B- in court documents, shared in an [NPR interview](#) back in May 2018 that even though she reached out to the police for help and tried to flee from her husband in her home country, **the abuse went on for 15 years.**

Despite the gravity of A-B-'s claims, Sessions decided to review the appellate case she won that granted her asylum and reverse the court's decision. In conjunction with his decision, Sessions determined **"Generally, claims by aliens pertaining to domestic violence or gang violence perpetrated by non-governmental actors will not qualify for asylum."**

This decision will put **thousands to tens of thousands** of victims of domestic violence and gang violence in danger internationally, particularly women in **Central America**, where rates of domestic violence are high, the government typically does not intervene, and survivors have nowhere else to turn.

FVAP in the News: Executive Director, Erin Smith, Talks Banding Together Fundraiser on ABC7

Check out [ABC7's televised interview](#) with FVAP's [Executive Director, Erin Smith](#), discussing the Banding Together to End Domestic Violence fundraisers!

Battle of the Bands Season Wrap-Up



Battle of the Bands 2018 is a wrap! This summer, a full lineup of **attorney bands** from California's top law firms and companies got on stage in San Francisco and Los Angeles and rocked out for the good cause that is the fight to **end domestic violence**.

Thanks to the overwhelming support of sponsors, guests, volunteers, and some very talented bands, we raised over **\$210,000**, which will directly benefit **FVAP's** appellate legal aid programs for low-income abuse survivors.

Congratulations to this year's winning bands! On **June 20 in San Francisco**, **The Combinations from Morgan Lewis won first place**, making them the **Best Lawyer Band in the Bay** who raised \$18,121 for survivors; second place went to last year's winner, Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP's band, The R-23s, who raised \$13,950; and third place and Judges' Choice were awarded to Greenberg Traurig's Attractive Nuisance, who brought in \$13,098.

On **July 12 in Los Angeles**, **Praedicat, Inc.'s band, MauxFaux, won the title of Best Lawyer Band in LA**, bringing in \$10,519 for survivors; last year's champs, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP's Papa Gibson & the Writs of Replevin came in second place with \$9,509, followed by Glancy Prongay & Murray LLP's Lodestar, who brought in \$2,970. Judges' Choice was awarded to Down by Law from Reed Smith LLP and Constangy, Brooks, Smith & Prophete, LLP.

Many thanks to our Wells Fargo volunteers and to our event sponsors, including top sponsors **Lieff Cabraser, Kirkland & Ellis, and Mayer Brown** and to our **bands** for putting on spectacular performances. Thank you to The Chapel nightclub in San Francisco and The El Rey in Los Angeles for having us.

We can't wait to rock out with you all again next year!

Photo by [Breslow Imaging/Cathy Breslow](#)

Spotlight: DOVES Selects FVAP Piece on LGBTQIA+ Communities for Discussion

We are excited to share that **Domestic Violence Education & Services** (DOVES) selected the **FVAP** piece, "**Queer and/or Trans Domestic Violence: A Primer for Lawyers, Advocates, and DV Victims**" to read at the South Regional domestic violence agencies meeting in Big Bear, CA on July 20. Representatives from **FVAP**, Family Assistance Program, A Better Way, Human Options, DOVES, Unity Home, Alternatives to DV, and Center for Community Solutions, discussed possible ways to be more inclusive of people in LGBTQIA+ communities. Suggestions like displaying community flags and ensuring the organizations have staff members who belong to the communities they serve were presented as important starting points.

While there is still little research on **LGBTQIA+** communities and domestic violence, the research we do have shows that rates of domestic violence in these communities are as high or higher, as compared to heterosexual and cisgender persons, indicating that further attention needs to be aimed at these communities in order for survivors to be better assisted.

FVAP looks forward to continuing to explore new ways to better serve **LGBTQIA+** communities and continuing to support domestic violence organizations in California looking for new ways to do the same. Our "Queer and/or Trans Domestic Violence" primer is available, along with many other toolkits and tip sheets, for free on the [Legal Resources section](#) of our website.

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