2017 Annual Report



Giving Survivors a Second Chance at Justice

What We Do

When there is nowhere else to turn, we're here to help.

FVAP is the only nonprofit in California dedicated to helping domestic violence survivors and their children by appealing dangerous trial court decisions on their behalf, for free. We help survivors of abuse get the safety and justice they deserve.

The Problem

The Solution

Trial court decisions are leaving survivors and their children at risk of ongoing abuse. In custody cases involving documented incidents of domestic violence, the abusive parent is granted custody up to 54% of the time. FVAP appeals and overturns these dangerous trial court decisions. Our goal is to empower survivors through the civil court system, and make sure survivors and their kids can live in safe, healthy environments, free from abuse.

The Strategy

By working at the appellatecourt level, each of FVAP's published cases helps not just one survivor, but also becomes binding legal precedent that helps countless other survivors statewide. We make sure California's domestic violence laws do what they're supposed to do keep survivors and kids safe.





From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

With the nationwide epidemic of abuse and harassment flooding the internet and news outlets under the #MeToo movement, 2017 quickly became a year of startling revelations, further reinforcing how crucial our work at Family Violence Appellate Project is. Domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment are all rooted in exerting power and control over someone, and are different yet related examples of societal oppressions that impact marginalized people most.

Despite the past year being a challenging one, empowerment was in the air, and we remained determined in this new era where survivors were declaring, "You are not alone." Thanks to your support, we added another 4 published appellate court decisions to California's growing body of legal precedent, which guides trial courts to protect abuse survivors and children. In addition, we adjusted our lens as an organization to identify the legal needs of California's communities most on the margins to bring creative legal solutions to their problems and those that impact survivors statewide.

FVAP is bringing voices and experiences of survivors to the forefront by overturning court decisions that leave survivors and their children in dangerous situations, and we are working to expand our efforts to help as many survivors as we can. This is what we will always strive for, and what you have already helped us achieve.

With great hope and sincere appreciation,

Erin Swil

Erin Smith, Esq. Executive Director & Co-Founder

How We Help

Legal Support

We provide free training, legal support, and technical assistance to shelters, advocates, and attorneys representing survivors in trial court. This program bridges the domestic violence and legal communities by training judges, court personnel, and attorneys on important DV issues, while training DV advocates on important legal issues.

Appellate Courts

Our main program ensures California domestic violence laws keep survivors and children safe, by representing survivors in appeals for free, filing amicus (friendof- the-court) briefs in cases of statewide importance, and requesting publication of unpublished cases to create binding legal precedent that benefits survivors statewide.



Next Generation

FVAP was founded by law students. We know students and young attorneys have the power and creativity to create real, systems-level change. From interns to our New Leadership Council, we consistently work to cultivate the next generation of passionate domestic violence advocates.

I cannot count the times I have been proud to cite a new case from FVAP.

What We Accomplished

Setting Legal Precedent

Every case we successfully appeal and publish sets statewide legal precedent that empowers survivors and protects kids across every corner of California. In addition to multiple cases that make it exponentially easier for survivors to renew their restraining orders, 2017 brought a groundbreaking legal victory for California immigrant survivors: the precedent set by *In re Marriage of Kumar* gives survivors the financial assurance they need to leave dangerous relationships, without the very real threat of extreme poverty or homelessness.

Rapid Response

In 2017, FVAP launched its Writs Project. A "writ" is a fast-tracked order from a higher court ordering a lower court to do something and may provide quick relief. In response, in 2017, FVAP successfully filed two writs on behalf of domestic violence survivors who faced multiple delays in their restraining order cases. We are hopeful these victories will set a precedent that abuse survivors should not have to wait months or even years to receive long-term restraining orders — a practice that puts survivors and their children in potentially dangerous situations.

Innovative Legal Solutions (Legal Resource Library)

Our 2016 statewide survey of domestic violence service providers revealed deep problems in courtrooms across California that put survivors and kids in danger. In response, in 2017, we developed selfhelp legal tools — tipsheets, toolkits, and template court documents — to address the worst problems identified by the state's most underserved regions. Our user-friendly legal tools and on-demand training videos are now available for free on our website to shelter workers and non-attorney advocates, who often accompany survivors to court because an attorney is not available. We will continue using information gathered from the field to create innovative tools that make our legal system more just for survivors.

Challenges

17 months is the median length of a CA civil appeal.

In **54%** of custody cases, a known domestic abuser is granted child custody.



The cost of an average appeal in California is **\$30,000-\$50,000.** We represent survivors for free with help from pro bono counsel.

Up to **90%** of California domestic violence survivors represent themselves in court without an attorney, usually because they cannot afford one.

Innovative Legal Solutions

FVAP's self-help legal tools are available in the Legal Resource Library of our website and are available for free to survivors, their advocates, and the legal aid/pro bono attorneys who represent them.





Inspiring Passionate Advocates

By training shelter workers and domestic violence service providers on legal issues, we give advocates the tools they need to help the survivors they serve. And by training judges, court personnel, attorneys, and law students on domestic violence issues, we're cultivating the next generation of passionate advocates in CA's legal community.

Thank you so much for helping us and thank you for giving me hope. ³³ Live training attendees

Pro bono attorneys recruited and mentored

Accomplishments

I feel so empowered and safe.



Financial

This is the first time in the years since I 'came out' about the nightmare that was my marriage that I have felt anyone has actually heard me.

Statement of Activities

Revenue & Support	2017
Foundation Grants	\$133,292
Fundraising Event Revenue	\$190,142
Individual Contributions	\$212,134
Corporate/Law Firm Contributions	\$21,780
Government Contracts	\$609,029
Contributions In-Kind	\$1,652,738
Other	\$5,322
Total Revenue & Support	\$2,824,437



Statement of Financial Position

Assets	2017
Cash & cash equivalents	\$1,205,179
Grants & pledges receivable	\$151,478
Other assets	\$19,026
Total Current Assets	\$1,375,683
Liabilities	
Accounts payable & accrued liabilities	\$29,949

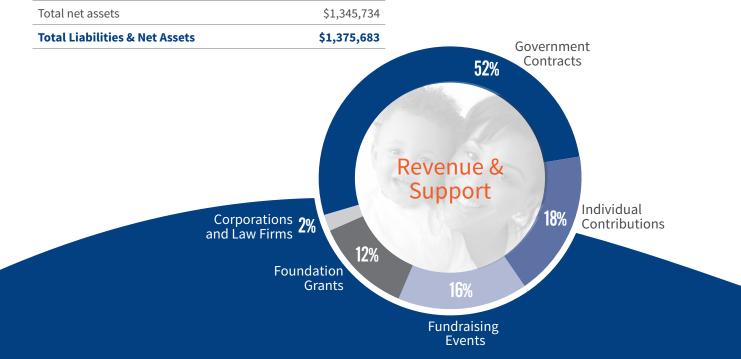
Deferred revenue

Net Assets Unrestricted

Total Current Liabilities

Temporariliy restricted





\$0

\$29,949

\$1,250,734

\$95,000

When the criminal system failed us, I stopped believing that my truth would ever be heard.

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