



BOARD OF DIRECTORS FAQs

WHAT IS FAMILY VIOLENCE APPELLATE PROJECT?

At Family Violence Appellate Project, we believe no one should endure abuse.

Unfortunately, domestic violence is far too common. 40% of women in California experience physical intimate partner violence at some point in their life. To make matters worse, studies show children living in abusive homes are far more likely to grow up to be abusers, thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence. And even when cases do go to court, legal decisions often threaten the safety and wellbeing of abuse survivors.

Family Violence Appellate Project exists to keep survivors and their families safe. We harness the power of the legal system by reversing trial court decisions that are dangerous for survivors. In 2018 alone we were part of the winning team on four California Supreme Court victories resulting in thousands of survivors and their children getting the safety and justice they deserve.

Our vision is to break the cycle of violence so everyone will live in a safe and healthy home. We will become a nation free of domestic abuse.

THE ORGANIZATION

Founded in 2012, FVAP is celebrating its 14th anniversary as the first and only nonprofit organization in California state dedicated to providing free legal representation to low-income survivors of intimate partner, family, and gender-based abuse at the appellate level. Our model helps not only individuals, but hundreds of thousands of survivors each year by creating an influential body of case law that will lead trial courts across the state to prioritize the safety and well-being of survivors and their children.

FVAP has been extremely successful in a short time. We have been involved in adding over 80 published cases to California law. FVAP also provides trainings and on-call legal assistance to domestic violence shelters and legal services providers, and we have an established Housing Safety and Justice program that works to ensure survivors are able to stay in their homes safely and free from abuse.



AS A BOARD MEMBER, WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

The general duties of the Board include:

Shaping Organizational Mission and Strategic Decisions

1. Ensure clarity of mission and vision.
2. Participate in and approve strategic and policy decisions.

Ensuring Leadership and Resources

3. Select, evaluate, and develop the Executive Director.
4. Ensure adequate financial resources.
5. Provide expertise and access or influence for organizational needs.
6. Build the organization's reputation.

Monitoring and Improving Performance

7. Oversee financial and risk management.
8. Monitor organizational performance.
9. Work to improve the Board's own performance.

In addition, Board members carry out fiduciary duties owed to the organization, including the duties of care, loyalty, and obedience.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

A few of the current opportunities and challenges the Board is working on at this time include:

- **Fundraising:** With expanded staff needs as a statewide organization and leaning into broader systems reform initiatives that are necessary to transform justice on broader scales, fundraising to support the long-term sustainability of our core programs is a priority.
- **Strategic Visibility:** Building on key learnings from FVAP's Washington State pilot which is now concluded, the Board has prioritized a strategic visibility initiative to elevate awareness of FVAP's impact and proven program model. This effort focuses on increasing national visibility to showcase the effectiveness of FVAP's data-backed approach to survivor-centered appellate advocacy. By amplifying our story, outcomes, and expertise, FVAP aims to strengthen fundraising efforts, attract new partners, and inspire the replication of similar models in other states—expanding access to justice for survivors far beyond California.



HOW OFTEN AND WHERE DOES THE BOARD MEET?

The Board meets quarterly (4 times/year) for 2 hours, typically Thursday mornings, but this can be changed if the Board chooses. Meetings are virtual.

In addition, the Board meets once per year for a full-day, in-person strategic retreat, typically in the Oakland area.

ARE THERE BOARD COMMITTEES?

Yes. Much of the Board's work is accomplished through the work of its committees: Executive, Audit, Finance, Diversity Equity Inclusion Access & Belonging (DEIAB), and Development Committees.

WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT?

Board members are asked to:

- Prepare for and attend Board meetings (4/year, 2 hours each, virtual)
- Join at least one Board committee, which typically meet virtually once every month or two, and devote the time needed to help your committee meet its goals
- Attend our major annual fundraising event and/or at least one smaller fundraising/outreach event
- Attend all strategic planning retreats, one full day a year, in person

IS THERE A FINANCIAL COMMITMENT?

Yes. All Board members are asked to give generously based on personal circumstances, make an annual financial contribution in a personally meaningful amount, and make FVAP one of your top 3 charitable giving priorities. Being able to demonstrate 100% Board giving is crucial to FVAP's ability to successfully fundraise from other sources, especially large individual donors and family foundations, in addition to showing commitment to the organization's financial stability.

We recognize that what giving generously means depends on one's personal circumstances. Here are some examples of what generous Board giving can look like. For example, some Board members may be capable of a \$25,000 annual personal contribution to meet their FVAP financial commitment. For others, a generous gift may be a \$1,000 personal contribution along with securing \$12,000 in corporate and law firm sponsors for the Battle of the Bands event.



And for others, giving generously may be a personal contribution of \$100 along with securing contributions of \$500 from others.

In addition to financial contributions, all Board members are asked to support fellow Board members' fundraising efforts and the Board's overall financial commitment to FVAP. To help with these efforts, we have developed Fundraising Tracks that include things like making thank you calls to donors or introducing potential new donors to FVAP. Each Board member is asked to sign up for at least one Fundraising Track and should complete all tasks associated with those Tracks, in addition to the other fundraising commitments they make.

WILL I SERVE A PARTICULAR TERM?

Board members are elected for 3-year terms, and Board members can serve up to 3 terms (a total of 9 years), with a possibility of longer service in certain circumstances.

I'M INTERESTED!

If you are interested in applying or learning more, please contact Executive Director Deborah Son at dson@fvaplaw.org, or Chair of the Executive Committee, Scott Johnston at scott.m.johnston@gmail.com.

Thank you for your interest in FVAP!

LEARN MORE ABOUT FVAP

Main website – www.fvaplaw.org

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