



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTIONALLIANCE

Action Alliance Public Policy Priorities 2009

1. Support and increase the marriage license fee to support an additional \$600,000 in funding for children and youth services. *Sen. Whipple, SB1429; Item #341-1s*

Rationale: Children and youth exposed to or directly experiencing sexual or domestic violence are at great risk of depression, anger, difficulties in school, withdrawal, problems sleeping, substance use/abuse, and difficulty developing or maintaining relationships. This new funding will provide age-appropriate services and prevention programming for children and youth. VSDVAA proposes to increase the marriage license fee to \$45 from \$30, with \$10 going to the Virginia Department of Social Services for children and youth services and the remaining \$5 to the Virginia General Fund.

2. Support legislation that requires local Commonwealth Attorneys to establish Sexual Assault Response Teams. *Del. Bell, HB2400*

Rationale: Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) have been shown to promote an effective community response to sexual assault, including increased reporting rates, higher quality evidence collection, improved conviction rates, and greater victim participation with the system. In addition, SARTs have been recognized as an effective, coordinated response that promotes a more successful criminal justice system response while minimizing the risk of re-traumatizing the victim.

3. Support legislation to expand the membership of the Criminal Justice Services Board to include a representative from the State Sexual and Domestic Violence coalition. *Del. Jones, HB 2640*

Rationale: The Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) administers 8-9 million annually in state and federal funds for local sexual and domestic violence services. The Criminal Justice Services Board, as a policy making and regulatory body, provides governance for DCJS and approves grants the Department awards to localities, state agencies and private non-profit organizations. VSDVAA wants to increase the number of seats for crime victims/victim organizations, to include a representative from the State Sexual and Domestic Coalition, to more accurately reflect the influence of DCJS on these issues.

4. Support legislation that allows undocumented immigrants to report crimes as victims or witnesses without fear of being asked about their immigration status. *Sen. Howell, SB1436*

Rationale: These protections will enhance public safety by assuring victims and witnesses of crime that they will not face immigration inquiries if they come forward to cooperate with law enforcement. Without such protections, victims and witnesses of sexual and domestic violence will not report crimes due to fear of deportation or other consequences related to their immigration status.

5. Support legislation that enhances the effectiveness of protective orders.

- SB 1439 Sens. Obenshain and Edwards
- HB 1857 Del. Shannon
- HB 2381 Del. J. Scott