

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

**PRIORITY CASE STUDIES FFY19
(Question 15)**

12/27/2019

Child Abuse

1. An adolescent female was referred to a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) for a forensic interview, and follow up support services following an incident of sexual assault by 3 individuals (all adult males) that also involved significant drug use. A forensic interview was conducted, and the victim was referred for a forensic medical examination. CAC's Victim Support Navigator provided accompaniment for the victim to the examination. In addition, the victim was referred to the CAC's specialized mental health services. After participating in numerous counseling sessions, the victim felt she was ready for court testimony. She was accompanied to the court prep meetings with the Commonwealth's Attorney by the Navigator, and by her counselor. Due to overwhelming physical evidence, and the strong testimony the victim was ready to give, the case ended with a plea agreement.
2. Two children came before the court due to allegations of significant neglect. The children were missing school, and when they did attend, they were going to school dirty and smelled of ammonia. A teacher found marijuana in a jar in the four-year old child's backpack. This child is autistic and nonverbal. The children's parents had significant mental health and substance abuse issues, which caused additional problems in the home. The children observed horrific domestic violence between their parents on numerous occasions, including witnessing their mother knocked unconscious after the children's father broke her nose and jaw. The father was found guilty on domestic assault charges and was placed in jail.

The children were ultimately removed from the home by the Department of Social Services. The six-year-old child was placed in the custody of the great-grandmother. The four-year-old child was placed in foster care due to the extraordinary special needs and the inability of the great grandmother to provide care. The CASA volunteer was a consistent presence in the children's lives and interacted frequently with the great-grandmother, foster mother, schools and social services. The CASA volunteer observed both children flourish in their new environments. The four-year-old child came into custody nonverbal, not potty-trained and had severe and violent tantrums. One year later, the child was potty-trained, not experiencing tantrums and had learned to speak a few words and communicate using sign language.

During this time, the parents were unsuccessful in meeting the requirements of the service plan. The CASA volunteer attempted to encourage the parents to cooperate with services provided and to communicate with the professionals involved with their case. The parents ultimately did not comply with the terms set forth by the court. CASA advocated for the older child to be permanently placed with the great grandmother. CASA also advocated for parental rights of the four-year old to be terminated to allow for a special needs placement to be secured. The court agreed these recommendations were in the best interest of both children and these recommendations were accepted.

3. At the young age of 5, Jaden (name changed) witnessed a violent incident between his parents, which resulted in sustained injuries to one parent. Jaden began counseling promptly after the incident. Jaden's counselor assessed his symptoms of PTSD, as well as his coping skills, family supports, and resiliency. Jaden quickly developed a trusting relationship with his counselor through a variety of play-based activities, while also engaging in therapeutic activities to understand family violence, safety, and the impact of trauma. Jaden has many questions about why the incident happened and worries about safety; however, counseling provides a healthy and safe environment to express and cope with those thoughts and feelings. Jaden's counselor has supported him to begin a trauma narrative using the Trauma-Focused CBT approach. Jaden has expressed a sense of pride in beginning to tell his story and share it with his supportive caregiver. Jaden and his family have a long road of healing ahead, including navigating the criminal justice system as victims and witnesses of the incident. Jaden's counselor has worked to advocate for Jaden and his mental health needs with the guardian ad litem and the family's attorney to ensure that his needs are considered in the legal process.

4. The Rockingham County Victim Witness (VW) program assisted with the families of six elementary aged victims who had been unlawfully filmed while at school. The offender has been charged with five felonies including unlawfully filming a minor child and possession of child pornography. VW staff met with each of the children's parents and the prosecutor to discuss the case at length, and are working on trying to resolve the case without having the girls testify. They have reviewed possible outcomes and are seriously considering the thoughts of the parents involved. They have ensured that each girl is in counseling, or that they have available referrals if they choose to attend counseling. One of the mothers involved does not speak English, so we have utilized our Spanish-speaking advocate to translate. We have also assisted that family in obtaining a U-Visa due to their cooperation with the investigation. If any of the girls have to testify, the staff will meet with them individually to do court preparation as well as a courtroom tour.

Domestic Violence

1. Mary (name changed), a mother of two, arrived at the Women's Resource Center's (WRC) emergency shelter with her two daughters, Jan and Amy, ages 13 and 3 (names changed). The family was fleeing domestic violence perpetrated by Mary's husband, the girls' stepfather. Mary was a hard working mother who worked 12-hour shifts. Upon arriving at the emergency shelter, Mary expressed concerns for the violence her children had witnessed and had concerns about how to make ends meet as a single parent. During the family's time at the WRC emergency shelter, Mary received support from a WRC adult counselor, as well as advocacy and accompaniment for spousal support hearings from a justice system navigator. While staying at the emergency shelter, the children were supported by the shelter children's counselor. WRC staff determined that it would be beneficial for the family to apply to the WRC transitional housing program, Cornerstone. Mary was accepted into Cornerstone and was excited to have a safe place for her family to live as well as the knowledge that they would all receive additional support as she began her life as a single parent.

When the family transitioned to Cornerstone, they received counseling from WRC counselors, including group and individual counseling by the Cornerstone children's counselor for Mary's daughters. As the school year began, it was discovered that Jan had shared a nude photo with her boyfriend, who proceeded to share it with others. Law enforcement and school administrators were notified of the photo and photo sharing and Jan was expelled from school.

WRC staff successfully mediated with the school to allow Jan to return to school. Following her return to school, Jan's anger continued to increase and in-home services were arranged through the local community service board to reinforce the counseling services Jan was receiving from the WRC Cornerstone children's counselor. Jan continued to display self-harming behaviors and was hospitalized in a psychiatric facility. Upon her release she continued to receive in-home counseling as well as individual and group counseling from the WRC Cornerstone children's counselor.

Mary and her family have continued to live violence-free at Cornerstone. The family continues to receive services from counselors who work on developing coping skills, conflict resolution skills, and how best to mediate family disagreements. Staff continues to work on developing healthy boundaries, communications skills, and providing ongoing support.

2. 25-year-old client D initially contacted New Directions Center (NDC) seeking shelter for herself and her two children (a 6-year-old boy and a 7-month old girl). Before contacting NDC, Client D was living with her boyfriend, who is also the father of her unborn child, in his father's home. Client D's boyfriend started using drugs and becoming increasingly aggressive and violent towards Client D and the children. Client D suffered constant verbal threats, physical assault, and threats with a weapon from her abuser. In the most recent incident, he held a knife to her throat and strangled her, inflicting multiple bruises on her body.

Someone at Client D's church told her about NDC, so Client D called the intake hotline and spoke to staff about the agency's shelter program. Client D and her children moved into shelter the following day and stayed there for two months. During that time, staff assisted Client D on her journey to self-independence by providing her with a safe, comfortable, and welcoming environment where she could focus on achieving her goals. Client D did not have any income when she arrived and received no financial assistance or child support for her two children. She worked diligently with the Director of Residential Services, who was able to assist Client D in applying for benefits such as SNAP and TANF. Staff provided Client D with referrals to additional community resources such as SACRA, staffing agencies, and online resources to search for employment, so Client D could begin earning income. She and her children began receiving counseling services on a regular basis and participated in various therapeutic opportunities offered by staff by staff and community volunteers. Client D found a job within a month of her stay, and since she did not have to worry about paying rent, she was able to focus on paying off some debts that would have prevented her from renting a place in the future.

Although Client D had her own transportation, she struggled with car issues and had to spend money on car repairs and expenses. NDC provided Client D with the time she needed to handle her responsibilities, so that by the time she was ready to transition into independent living, she was confident about her ability to support herself and her children. In addition to being able to focus on saving money for her own apartment, NDC was able to offer Client D's children a loving and comfortable home in which to play, explore, and participate in arts and crafts that served as play therapy for them. Client D was also able to focus on parenting her children in a safe environment, yielding positive growth and healing in the family's transformative journey to a life without violence.

3. A victim of domestic violence was referred to First Step by her child's school. When the victim took the child to school, she requested help from school employees the morning after being

assaulted by her boyfriend. The school called First Step on her behalf and arranged a meeting at First Step offices. The school also contacted the Harrisonburg Police Department. The Domestic Violence Investigator and another officer came to First Step to meet the victim. Law Enforcement secured an Emergency Protective Order on the victim's behalf. The victim and her child entered the shelter because they did not feel safe in their apartment. During her stay, the Legal Advocate assisted the victim in filing for a Preliminary Protective Order and accompanied her to court hearings. The Bilingual Advocate assisted the victims in applying for benefits through the local Department of Social Services and referred her to community resources. The Child and Youth Advocate assisted the victim in setting up transportation services through the school for her child to continue at the same school. The victim was able to return to a job that she was forced to give up by her abuser several months prior. The Housing and Employment Advocate assisted her in communicating with landlords, including the landlord at the apartment she shared with the abuser. Since the abuser was ordered out of the apartment by the courts, the landlord was willing to remove his name from the lease as well as shared the lease with another victim from the First Step shelter and her child. The two victims agreed to live together, share costs of living as well as covering childcare duties while the other worked opposing shifts. First Step was able to provide them with short-term rental assistance. The Housing and Employment Advocate has provided follow-up and case management services since the victim moved out of the shelter.

4. Client "Sabrina" (name changed) entered the Artemis House emergency shelter program after the Chief Program Officer for Domestic Violence Services received a request for service coordination assistance from a partner within the county's coordinated community response. Sabrina and her two children entered the emergency shelter program. Upon entry Sabrina disclosed the severity of her physical and emotional abuse spanned 12 years. She requested intensive continuing services and crisis intervention from the Senior Trauma Counselor. During Sabrina's participation in the emergency shelter program she identified and reconnected with her natural familial support system out of state. Sabrina was able to successfully relocate to safer community near her family with the support of the Artemis House emergency shelter staff
5. Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc. (SVLAS) is a private, non-profit law firm based in southwestern Virginia. The practice provides free civil legal services to low-income families in 17 counties and four small cities. Civil legal aid programs such as SVLAS utilize VOCA funds to provide a multitude of services to victims of crime to include direct legal representation, advice and counseling, community education and self-help and technology tools that can help low-income and middle-class families understand their legal options. Within the relevant time period, the organization has continued to generate vital services to victims of domestic violence and other crimes. A VOCA funded attorney within the organization provided comprehensive services to a female victim and her three children following her separation from an abusive spouse who also engaged in substance abuse. The attorney worked diligently to obtain a one-year protective order that prohibited the abuser from having contact with the victim. The order also granted the victim exclusive use of their home and pets. Moreover, staff secured child-support payments for the victim and her family as well as participated in divorce negotiations and ultimately aided in finalizing a divorce.

The separation also warranted services be offered to the victim's children. The staff at SVLAS provided referrals to a local Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence organization to allow them to receive the appropriate therapeutic services needed to process their feelings and concerns related to the events. The team was also critical in coordinating supervised visits with the abuser

to promote the safety of the children involved.

Sexual Violence

1. A child sexual assault survivor, "Maria" and her mother, "Tina" (names changed), received several services from Loudon Abused Women's Shelter. Those services included: counseling, court accompaniment, advocacy, and legal services. Maria had suffered significant trauma during and after her sexual assault. As Tina witnessed her daughter struggling, it triggered memories of her own childhood sexual assault that she had never disclosed or sought treatment for. Tina began to display symptoms that mirrored PTSD as she recalled her own traumatic experiences. Tina was referred by LAWS' Advocates to the Sexual Assault Services Director for Crisis Counseling. Tina successfully completed all crisis counseling sessions for secondary survivors as well as adult survivors of childhood sexual assault. Tina reported outcomes of improved outlook on life, coping skills, and ability to maintain the household of her family again. Through crisis counseling with LAWS, Tina successfully worked through her sexual assault trauma and reported less anxious feelings as well as the ability to process and utilize Grounding coping skills. Tina reports that her future goal is to go back to school to obtain her nursing degree. She feels she is now ready and able to assist with the cost of recently being a single mother. Tina shared that with LAWS help, she was able to set goals for her and her children's future.
2. Client is a 31-year-old Caucasian female that presented to RCASA after having recurrent and intrusive thoughts about a violent sexual assault when client was 19. Client is currently married with 2 young children and is pregnant with her third child. It was determined client was to receive individual counseling services. Client reported an increase in anxiety, flashbacks and intrusive thoughts about the traumatic event. Client reported feeling "on edge" and hypervigilant, body tension and rapid heartrate, all impacting sleep. Client reported an increase in depressive symptoms such as feelings of hopelessness and crying. Client has received services for approximately 9 months. The client currently reports a decrease in all post-traumatic stress responses and an improvement in sleep. Client reports having no flashbacks or intrusive thoughts about the sexual assault. Client reports feeling as though she is in "control of what is happening in my mind and body". Client expresses positive and appropriate thought patterns and an improved ability to manage stressors. Client reported that she is no longer experiencing symptoms of depression and has an overall positive outlook on the future, and is no longer "devastated by setbacks or minor disappointments".
3. During the quarter of April 1, 2019 to June 30, 2019, Augusta County Victim/Witness staff worked with a 13-year-old sexual assault victim. The program director referred the victim for counseling, and met with the victim and her mother on multiple occasions. While the forensic interview determined the events took place in Rockingham County, there were some conflicts in the Commonwealth Attorney's office that brought the case back to Augusta County, although the Rockingham County Sheriff's Office continued to conduct an investigation. The Victim Witness director worked with both localities to set up all needed interviews at the local CAC and accompanied the family during those meetings. The director has maintained contact with the victim's mother, getting updates on the child's therapy and progress.
4. Safehome Systems assisted a 9-y/o female sexual assault victim and her biological father

with a sexual assault case after her school principal had contacted their office. The Child Counselor began seeing the victim twice a week in school. The Court Advocate worked with the father on the criminal justice process as well as his emotions regarding the assault. The case went to circuit court in March. Both the counselor and the court advocate collaborated in providing support to the family during court with testifying and explaining the process. Both staff attended the pretrial meeting and worked closely with local Victim/Witness and Commonwealth's Attorney staff. The Child Counselor attended the trial while the victim testified per her request since it was an open trial and the victim was distressed after cross examination and ultimately when the defendant was not guilty of the felony sexual assault charges. The counselor and advocate have continued to make themselves available to victim and her family.

Underserved

1. Patrick County Victim/Witness Grant Program (VW) provides services to victims of various crimes a very rural area of Virginia. The VW Director was contacted by the local Sheriff's Office after an 80+ year old female victim had been assaulted by her son. The victim was seen by VW staff who provided advocacy services as well as an Adult Protective Services referral. The VW staff was also critical in assisting with securing appropriate housing for the victim within an assisted living community. The VW staff provided accompaniment during court proceedings in addition to the court process to the victim. VW staff notes that they continue to engage in work with the local APS due to the client's deteriorating condition. The client has been successfully relocated out of the area and the defendant has been ordered to not contact the victim.
2. The Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ESCADV) identified that of the clients they serve, 19 % of the adult clients are Latinx. After reviewing their statistics, the ESCADV made strides in successful outreach to these traditionally underserved communities in a variety of ways. ESCADV currently employs two bi-lingual (English/Spanish) advocates. These advocates attend community events targeting the Latinx community, including Headstart Parent Meetings, resource fairs at migrant camps, and faith based groups serving in the community. The advocates also assist Latinx survivors with the immigration/asylum process. The agency has a Spanish intake form as well as a Spanish client survey.
3. Dolores (name changed) met her husband, an American citizen, while performing in a folkloric dance company in South America. He promised to provide a better life for her and her daughter from another relationship, but when she arrived in the U.S., he began to abuse her physically, sexually, and emotionally. Dolores is now divorced from her abuser, but they continue to share custody of their two children. After Dolores's eldest son disclosed that he and his brother were being physically abused by their father, Ayuda assisted Dolores in obtaining a preliminary protective order for her children and advocated for Child Protective Services to take action on the child's disclosure. Ayuda is currently assisting Dolores in filing for a modification of her custody order in the hopes of providing her children with more permanent protection from their father's abuse.
4. Mary (name changed) initially came to the U.S. with her husband, a diplomat, and four children, and her family grew as she welcomed a fifth child in her new home. Facing severe forms of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, both in the U.S. and abroad, Mary courageously escaped her abusive husband with her children. Mary was subsequently

referred to Tahirih for legal and social services by a local domestic violence shelter. Over the course of Mary's long journey to justice, Mary has received intensive case-management by Tahirih multiple times. While Mary was placed in a 2 year transitional housing program, she experienced challenges in securing employment because of her lack of employment authorization and high child care needs. In addition, while Mary and her Tahirih family law attorney explored child support options, Mary feared that pursuing child support would reveal her location to her husband, and would expose her to more abuse, and the possibility of losing her children. Mary felt extremely unprotected because of her husband's diplomat status, and the immunity that the diplomat status provides. Mary decided that declining child support was in the best interest for herself and her children. As a result, Mary has remained extremely vulnerable because of her economic instability.

Since becoming a Tahirih client, Mary has also received clothing donations for her and her children, food donations, assistance identifying housing after completing her 2-year transitional housing program, support getting her driver's license, assistance signing up her children to child-care options, and supportive counseling. Due to the complexity of her case and her family's high needs, Tahirih has worked with over 5 different agencies, including her children's school, to ensure Mary and her family receive the support they need. Earlier this year, Mary received her Employment Authorization Card, which allowed her to find employment that met her needs. Mary continues to work hard to ensure her family thrives.

5. Maria (name changed), an immigrant survivor of violence, was continuously raped, emotionally and financially abused and threatened to be deported by her United States Citizen husband, who also emotionally and verbally abused Maria's two young children. He deprived them of basic needs, such as proper winter clothing and enough food to survive. With the support of VOCA-funded staff, Maria worked to pursue humanitarian immigration protections to which she is entitled; Maria was able to obtain legal permanent status and provide security and stability for her two children. Maria has obtained approval of her immigration petition and is now awaiting to adjust status. Maria also secured support to access a variety of resources and services to meet urgent needs for herself and her children.