



**AGAINST VIOLENCE**  
Laurie's House

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**TO:** Rep. Ann Pugh, Chair  
House Human Services Committee

**FROM:** Kristin Lukens  
Director, Voices Against Violence

**DATE:** April 10, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Kris Lukens. I work at Voices Against Violence which provides services to people who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, teen dating violence and stalking in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties.

Today is the Vermont Network's Legislative Day so I am here to share with you some information about the services we provide at Voices and how we collaborate with partners to help victims stay safe in their own community.

First, thank you for your support of domestic and sexual violence victims. I appreciate your willingness to address the known lethality when firearms are present in domestic violence situations by passing H.422.

Thank you also for creating more access to after hours relief from abuse orders by passing H.836 allowing for electronic filing.

At Voices we provide:

**Crisis Intervention and Support** - 24 hour crisis line coverage, assistance with Relief from Abuse Orders, assistance with protection and safety plans, ongoing support (individual and group), information and referral, and hospital emergency room support. We outreach to traditionally underserved and marginalized populations in efforts to make services more accessible to all.

**Advocacy** – Assisting victims with accessing community supports and resources, helping them identify their safety options through the criminal justice system and beyond, supporting them in their own ability to advocate for themselves

**Housing and economic advocacy** - Laurie's House is our temporary emergency housing available for victims and their children 24/7. Our Transitional Housing Program is a scattered site (currently 7) model with supportive services from 1 to 2 years. Both are strength based.

**Services to Children/Youth** – we support moms in strengthening their relationships with their children by offering children's programming in shelter, Individual follow-up and support, playgroups, parent education, and support groups.

**Community Outreach, Education and Training** –We engage the community through

workshops, trainings, presentations focus groups, awareness events and partnerships on domestic and sexual violence. Through Voice's outreach and education component, children, youth and adults are offered the information and tools needed to make healthy and safe choices.

**Social justice and advocacy**— We work in collaboration with our partners to strengthen policies and systems to be more responsive to victims while holding offenders accountable.

**All About Kids**— A Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Center for families involved with *domestic and sexual violence and child abuse*.

Last year, we served 534 unduplicated adults and 321 unduplicated children/youth and 1971 contacts on behalf of a person experiencing domestic or sexual violence. We received 797 hotline calls, and provided 2917 instances of advocacy (Legal, hospital, housing, social service); *9254 Instances of support, safety planning, crisis intervention*.

36 victims and 28 children were provided housing at Laurie's House for a total of 2519 shelter nights but were unable to serve 92 due to full capacity. In addition we were able to provide longer term transitional housing for 14 families.

Our All About Kids program served 38 families (51 children).

Groups, agencies and individuals have a long history of collaboration in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. We have some innovative collaborative projects that help build the capacity to provide trauma informed services to victims.

Our partnership with Economic Services allows victims who are experiencing violence to be housed in hotels when shelter is full. Without this connection and policy, many victims would be forced to remain in their abusive situations.

Our Family Services Coordinator specifically works with families with DCF Child Protective Services involvement through direct advocacy while addressing systems issues that may hurt or disempower victims/moms. This has strengthened relationships that ultimately help families.

Voices and Northwest Counseling and Support Services are working on a project that will highlight the intersectionality of domestic violence, mental health and substance use and *provide ongoing skills development opportunities for all service providers*.

A Voices' Advocate continues to be co located at Probation and Parole to provide support to victims and those victims involved in the criminal justice system while continuing to be a resource for Probation Officer.