



Victims Services Spotlight on Abuse Alternatives

Sharon Reed, *Victims Services Program Specialist*

Abuse Alternatives provides comprehensive, confidential domestic violence services to survivors and their children. The agency is based on the border of Virginia and Tennessee in Southwest Virginia where they offer a wide range of services to include temporary emergency shelter, 24/7 crisis hotline, support groups, children's programs, transportation, and a multitude of outreach services.

Judy Clark, Director of Outreach Services in Washington County, Virginia, received a domestic violence report that stated the officer had observed a female assaulting the male victim in front of their two children. The report went on to state that the male victim did not speak English so the female suspect was allowed to interpret all communications from the victim to the officer. The female was charged with family abuse and an emergency protective order (EPO) was issued for the children and victim.

Mrs. Clark identified several obstacles and barriers when she began her advocacy for the victim. She discovered that in Washington County, 98.09% of the residents speak only English, while 1.91% speak other languages. The non-English language spoken by the largest group is Spanish, which is spoken by 1.11% of the population. She discovered that victim access to those who spoke Spanish or had forms and pamphlets written in Spanish was limited or non-existent.

The victim in this case was ineligible for various services due to his immigration status. Undeterred, Mrs. Clark recalled an email that she had recently received from Latinos in Virginia Empowerment (LIVE) Center. She reached out and spoke to an advocate. Together, they were able to provide quality services to ensure the victim had a voice in all matters, and they were able to provide victim-centered and trauma informed services to the victim.

The story could end here, but these two advocates went further: LIVE Center staff provided a training to the Abuse Alternatives staff; LIVE Center information was added to all of Abuse Alternatives resource guides, brochures, and intake packages; LIVE Center posters are now displayed in all Abuse Alternatives public offices as well as the Emergency Crisis Shelter; members of the Washington County and City of Bristol Coordinated Community Response Team attended a LIVE Center virtual presentation; Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies were provided LIVE Center information pocket cards; LIVE Center information was added to the Abingdon Police Department's Domestic Violence Brochure; posters promoting the LIVE Center hotline are now located at all General District and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Clerk Offices, as well as the Court Services Units in Bristol and Washington County.

The advocates' actions in this matter advanced safety, empowerment, choice, autonomy, and equitable communication for this victim and all that will follow. All it took was for one agency to reach out to another and start the conversation, thus empowering and assisting all victims in that locality.

Please contact Mrs. Clark or LIVE Center to learn more about their collaboration. You can reach them at:

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DCJS Resources in Spanish:

- **Declaración de Impacto de la Víctima – Commonwealth de Virginia**

Victim Impact Statement – Commonwealth of Virginia

www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/publications/victims/victim-impact-statement-spanish.pdf

- **Derechos de Víctimas y Testigos de Delitos en Virginia**

Virginia Crime Victim and Witness Rights Card

www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/publications/victims/crime-victim-witness-rights-card-spanish.pdf

- **VAMOS A LA CORTE: Libro de Actividades para Niños**

Going To Court: An Activity Book for Children

www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/publications/victims/going-court-activity-book-children-spanish.pdf

- **Guía Informativa para Víctimas de Violencia Doméstica en Virginia – Comprensión del Proceso Legal para Víctimas de Maltrato Doméstico**

An Informational Guide for Domestic Violence Victims in Virginia – Understanding the Legal Process for Victims of Family Abuse

www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/publications/victims/informational-guide-domestic-violence-victims-virginia-spanish.pdf