

*Choices*  
*Council on Domestic Violence*  
*For*  
*Page County, Inc.*



*Annual Report*  
*2016 - 2017*

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# **CHOICES, COUNCIL ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FOR PAGE COUNTY, INC.**

## **Mission Statement**

*“To prevent both domestic and sexual violence through public awareness and education and to serve as a resource and a safe haven to those affected.”*

### **Objectives:**

- To provide emergency shelter and support services for battered women and their children in the County of Page, including towns of Luray, Stanley, and Shenandoah.
- To provide crisis intervention counseling and emotional support for victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.
- To provide information and referral services throughout the County of Page, including towns of Luray, Stanley, and Shenandoah.
- To act as an advocate for victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault in other systems or agencies upon request.
- To promote public awareness of the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault, and to provide community education on these issues.
- To work cooperatively with other agencies or groups who deal with specific needs/concerns of women who are victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

## Her Story

Ellie came to shelter following an assault by her boyfriend. She has had many barriers to independence. She was unable to secure reliable, affordable childcare during the hours she worked and she lost her job due to absenteeism. She has had struggles finding quality childcare. She recently opened up about her drug use and struggles to stay in recovery. She has started going back to Narcotics Anonymous.

The Services Coordinator has provided goal planning on a bi-weekly basis. Ellie has also received peer counseling to help her throughout her emotional trauma.

The Court Advocate assisted with the numerous court dates related to custody. The boyfriend's parents have filed for custody because they felt like both parents are unstable. At the last hearing, custody was temporarily granted to Ellie with mediation ordered to work out custody and visitation issues.

The Children's Services Coordinator has provided assessments and information and referral. Ellie has participated in parenting groups and the children have attended support group and participated in play groups.

She is working with the Housing Services Coordinator, to assess her housing needs and look for affordable safe housing for her and her children.

She received emotional support during her stay at the shelter. She is back to work and has found affordable childcare.

Ann's estranged husband stopped in to see their son. After their son was put to bed for a nap, the husband raped Ann. After reporting to the local hospital, the police notified the Sexual Assault Victim Advocate to meet Ann at another hospital to be with her during a forensic exam. The Sexual Assault Victim Advocate also accompanied Ann within 72 hours of the rape to the magistrate, who denied Ann's request for an emergency protective order.

Ann had previously worked with the Court Advocate regarding custody and support issues. She was already receiving professional counseling through the therapist who works with Choices clients and is paid through VOCA funds.

The Court Advocate (CA) assisted her with filing for a preliminary protective order which was granted by the judge. The CA also gave her a referral to Blue Ridge Legal Services and went with Ann to the first meeting with the attorney. Ann pressed charges against her husband for rape and the CA sat with her during the investigator's interview.

Ann is self-employed and not receiving any assistance from her estranged husband. She was referred to the Children's Services Coordinator for assistance with child care expenses. Ann was approved for financial assistance for child care.

Ann has been diagnosed with PTSD and requires a lot of emotional support in dealing with her trauma. She frequently stops by the office of the Sexual Assault Victim Advocate and CA to talk. Ann also continues to see the therapist on a weekly basis.

*ALL NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY*

## Choices Provided for the Safety and Protection of Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence and their Children in Page County July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017



### Provided temporary 24-hour safe shelter to:

-  67 women
-  55 children
-  Total of 3,314 bed nights

The above number combines the Luray shelter with the new-this-year efficiency apartment in Shenandoah. Choices sheltered two residents there for a total of 155 bed nights.

### Of the 64 families exiting the shelter this year:

- 8% entered another shelter
- 1% went back home with their abuser
- 1% went home and their abuser was no longer present
- 8% left the area
- 48% went to stay with a family or friend
- 25% were able to obtain self-supported housing
- 8% were unknown.



### Each family in the shelter stayed for as long as was needed to have their individual needs met:

- 69% stayed at the shelter for up to one month
- 16% 30 to 60 days
- 9% stayed 60 to 90 days
- 6% stayed for over 90 days

### Because of the services Choices provided:

- 94% of those receiving services said they knew how to better plan for their safety.
- 97% of those receiving services said they knew more about community services that were available to them.
- 97% of those receiving services were more hopeful about their future.

### Residents are asked to describe their experiences they had with the shelter. Here are some responses:

*"I feel so good about myself now. I feel supported and was encouraged to meet my goals. I have my own place. I made it!"*

*"I am so happy to be moving forward. I could not have done it without the people at Choices!"*

*"I finally had privacy. My family and I felt safe."*

## **Choices provided advocacy to 746 individuals, empowering survivors of domestic and sexual violence.**

### **Demographics of those receiving services:**

- ‡ 12% were men, 87% were women and 1 identified as transgender.
- ‡ 84% of those served were Caucasian, 5% African American, 1% were Asian, 5% were Hispanic, 2% were native American, and 3% were multi-racial

### **Ages:**

- ‡ 10% were under the age of 18.
- ‡ 9% were between the ages of 18 to 24.
- ‡ 44% were between the ages of 25 to 39.
- ‡ 29% were between the ages of 40 and 59.
- ‡ 8% were over the age of 60.

## **Choices provided comprehensive support services in person to those individuals who experienced domestic and/or sexual violence.**

- 95% received crisis intervention services.
- 100% received counseling and support services.
- 98% received information and referral services.
- 94% developed a safety plan that identified options for getting out of an unsafe situation. This is a 20% increase over last year.

Thanks to increased funding through VOCA, the Victims of Crimes Act, Choices was able to increase services this year.

- ★ 4% more crisis intervention services.
- ★ 19% more counseling and support services.
- ★ 5% more information and referral services.
- ★ 20% more safety planning services.

Choices provided 49 support group sessions for women. Those who attended support groups were able to identify 3 red flags indicating an unhealthy relationship. Those who attended also worked on building a positive self-esteem.

## Choices criminal justice staff assisted:



- 🏛️ 145 victims of domestic violence with court services, including:
  - 69 were provided accompaniment to court on criminal matters.
  - 51 individuals were assisted with civil matters, including obtaining protective orders, filing for custody or visitation.

Choices responded to 433 calls on the 24-hour hotline.

- ☎️ 82% of the calls were related to family violence.
- ☎️ 23% of the calls were related to sexual assault.
- ☎️ 11% of the calls were related to other services such as being unable to meet basic needs like shelter, food, or clothing.
- ☎️ 100% of the callers were more informed of the services available.
- ☎️ 91% of the callers were given referrals to community resources that increased their capacity to live violence-free lives.



## Choices provided comprehensive support services to 55 children living in the shelter whose families have experienced domestic and sexual violence.



- ❖ Children were taught communication skills, problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
- ❖ Parents of children participated in individualized parenting sessions and nutrition classes.
- ❖ The Children's Services Coordinator assessed the children to determine their individual needs. The Children's Services Coordinator and the parent then worked together to develop and Individual Services Plan to meet those needs.

## Rapid Rehousing Program

Choices helped 11 adults and 12 children move into permanent housing with Virginia Homeless Services Program funds. All families were financially assisted with deposits for rent and utilities and three months of rent. After the first three months, a re-certification was required and if found eligible, the family could receive additional rental assistance.



**Choices gave 74 presentations to 1,633 children in Page County Public Schools, providing resources and tools to develop healthy relationships. This is a 22% increase over FY16.**



- 23 pre-school children heard about Choices and identified feelings that someone else might be expressing.
- 154 kindergarten students learned about feelings and how to express them.
- 191 first graders participated in activities that demonstrated, “Words Are Not for Hurting.” After the presentation, 100% of 1<sup>st</sup> graders were able to use kind words to compliment their classmates.
- 208 second graders participated in activities that demonstrated, “10 Things They Can Do Instead of Hitting.” After the presentation, 100% of second graders could name one thing they could do when they were angry that did not include hitting.
- 167 third graders participated in activities that discussed “The Bully Blockers Club” giving them the tools to identify bullying behavior and recognizing safe people to talk to. After the presentation, 98% of third graders could identify at least one bullying behavior.
- 167 fourth graders participated in activities that gave them a tool to identify, “Are You a Bully?” this taught them how to recognize and deal with bullying. After the presentation, 96% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders could name at least one strategy in dealing with a bully.
- 208 fifth grade students participated in activities that showed them how to set healthy boundaries with their friends. After the “Frenemies” presentations, 92% of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students could identify one way to communicate healthy boundaries to a friend.
- 431 high school students participated in activities that helped them identify the difference between a healthy relationship and an unhealthy relationship. After the presentations, 94% of high school students could identify at least one red flag that indicated an unhealthy relationship.
- Presentations were also made in Orientation classes at Lord Fairfax Community College on Healthy Relationships and Dating Violence.
- Choices provided Trauma and Self-Care Presentations to 4 different groups.
- Choices provided Recognizing Domestic Violence training to the Page County Technical Center nursing class.
- Choices had information tables at the two Triad Conferences about domestic violence and elder abuse. Choices also had information tables at the fair, Chamber of Commerce events and at United Way events.

## **Volunteers Helped Improve Services and Facilities for Clients**

**In fiscal year 2016-2017, 46 volunteers gave a total of 717 hours of service.**

People served as members of the Board of Directors, helped with fundraising, publications, updating the website, shelter upkeep and cared for sheltered children. Volunteers assisted with support groups and facilitated work sessions on nutrition, parenting and self-care. Volunteers also performed clerical work and answered hotline calls.

**We thank the MANY folks who gave time, skills, goods, prayers and good wishes. It's impossible to quantify so many of these gifts, but they are much appreciated by all who turn to Choices for help.**



**Choices, Council on Domestic Violence for Page County, Inc. partners with:**

- Virginia Domestic and Sexual Violence Action Alliance (VDSVAA)
- Page Alliance for Community Action (PACA)
- SALT (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together)/TRIAD
- Page County Community Response Team (CRT/SART)
- Homeless Advocacy Network
- Northern Shenandoah Valley Continuum of Care (CoC)
- Page County Public Schools
- Page County United Way
- Local law enforcement agencies
- Commonwealth Attorney's Office
- Page County Victim Witness Program

## **2016 - 2017 Highlights**

- There were many improvements and increased services within the agency and community! These changes were the result of an increase in Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds through the Dept. of Criminal Justice Services and the Va. Dept. of Social Services funding. Local donations and grants provided direct aid and helped to secure additional funding at other levels.
- Choices hired two new full-time staff members who increased our ability to provide quality services. One is a Community/Volunteer Outreach Coordinator in Luray and the second is the Advocate/Outreach Coordinator in the Town of Shenandoah.
- Choices opened a satellite office and efficiency apartment for emergency shelter in Shenandoah to better provide services to victims in the southern end of the county. Staff brainstormed of ways to better serve our community after hearing of increased funding opportunities and decided that an office in Shenandoah would be a great start. We had often heard of women in the southern part of the county who wanted to receive services but found it difficult due to the distance and lack of transportation. This project was positively received by the Shenandoah community and Choices is grateful for their support and encouragement.
- Choices was able to rent office space in Luray to house the Sexual Assault Victim Advocate, the Court Advocate and the Housing Services Coordinator. They frequently work with women who are not in the shelter. Having an office outside the shelter has increased confidentiality of both shelter and non-sheltered clients, as well as provided a much more pleasant environment.
- In January 2017, Choices rented an additional office for the Executive Director, Community/Volunteer Outreach Coordinator, and the Media Outreach Coordinator. This space also has a nice conference room for meetings and training.
- By vacating two offices and the “copy room” in the shelter and relocating three employees nearby, we were able to improve the Luray shelter space. The two upstairs offices became bedrooms, the “copy room” a dining area and the conference room a children’s play area. These changes allow upstairs residents to have their needs met on that floor and provides more beds for women who cannot climb on bunkbeds.
- In May of 2016 the old furnace in the shelter quit working and could not be repaired. We replaced the furnace with a new one in August 2016.
- The second floor was retiled, replacing the 19-year old, cracked and breaking tiles. Both the upstairs and downstairs were professionally painted for the first time.
- Choices held our first Candlelight Vigil in October at Main Street Baptist Church. Over 30 people heard a survivor’s powerful and healing story.

- With all the changes taking place, we further increased media outreach to make the more community aware. There were news spots on WHSV-TV, radio, the newspaper, and outreach on Facebook. There was also face to face introductions, an increase in partner agency meetings and flyers distributed.
- We created a paid ad for a local radio station with a local couple declaring their support of Choices.
- We worked with the local WMXH Bright Radio to create PSAs for April's Sexual Assault Awareness Month, February's Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month and January's Stalking Awareness Month.
- In October, Page News and Courier carried our Just Three Words photo and caption, "Break the Silence." The following week their front-page article, "Stop the Silence" focused on Choices mission and services. In November, the PNC carried our "Thank you all," letter to the editor.

## Grants and Major Contributors July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

### Federal/State/Private Grants

#### Department of Housing and Community Development

- Homeless Services Grant \$21,620.00
- Rapid Re-Housing Program \$46,662.00

#### Department of Criminal Justice Services

- V-STOP \$27,659.00
- Sexual Assault /Domestic Violence Grant Program (VOCA) \$403,525.00
- Domestic & Sexual Violence Victims Fund \$26,820.00
- Sexual Assault Services Pro. \$9,436.00

#### Other

- Va. Dept. of Social Ser. \$149,800.00
- Warren & Katherine Coopersmith Foundation \$20,000.00
- Andersen Foundation Grant \$7,500.00

#### Local Government

- County of Page \$5,000.00
- Town of Shenandoah \$500.00

#### Local Contributions

- United Way \$5,000.00
- Businesses \$6,608.00
- Churches \$8,090.00
- Fundraisers \$26,856.00
- Individual Donors \$25,271.00
- Organizations \$2,356.00

***Our thanks to the many people and organizations which have provided funds to help make our services in our community possible!***

*Anyone wishing to see a 2016-2017 Financial Report may do so by contacting the Executive Director and requesting a copy.*

## SERVICES PROVIDED BY CHOICES



Bedroom

**24 Hour Hotline** – Persons in need can call any time to speak with a trained volunteer or staff member.

**Emergency Shelter** – Safe housing is provided to victims and children. Shelters are in Luray and Shenandoah.

**Crisis Intervention & Safety Planning** – Caring staff and volunteers are available to discuss the problems faced, provide information and referrals, and assist with services.

**Individual Peer Counseling** – Support and education to victims of domestic and sexual violence.

**Adult Support Groups** – Provide information and peer support and encourage self-esteem for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

**Children’s Support/Education Groups** – Provides education and peer support for children in families dealing with domestic and sexual violence. Provides children with an outlet for their feelings outside of a family setting.

**Children’s Services Coordination** – Children and adolescents are assessed and services coordinated with the parent and community programs. Education provided to parents in parenting skills and good parenting is encouraged.

**Emergency Transportation** – Can be provided for the safety of victims and children. Safety of all involved, including staff, are considered with these services.

**Legal Advocacy** – Trained court advocates lend support to victims by explaining legal proceedings and accompanying them to court.

**Information and Referral** – Provide information to clients and will refer them to other community groups or agencies that are most appropriate to the needs of the person.

**Community Response Team** – Representatives from most service agencies in the community meet at least 4 times per year to discuss concerns and issues surrounding domestic and sexual violence. The CRT helps to promote good will and good working relationships between all community agencies who participate.

**Community Education and Awareness** – Provide training and education to community groups and para-professionals about the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence and solutions to the problem of family violence in our community.

**Education/Community Outreach** – Provide education and outreach into the community. This includes a comprehensive program in Page County Schools.

## **Staff Positions**

### **Executive Director**

Manages all programs, services and administrative functions. Develops, tracks and reconciles all budgetary and fiscal matters.

### **Services Coordinator**

Provides direct services to clients: goal planning, information and referral, and assists with problem solving. Provides crisis intervention, support and advocacy. Recruits, trains and supervises volunteers. Assists with public awareness and education.

### **Court Advocate**

Provides information on court proceedings, accompaniment to court and works with clients to help determine the most appropriate legal action. Aids in the prosecution of family violence and sexual assault cases by providing victim assistance.

### **Sexual Assault Victim Advocate**

Provides information on court proceedings, provides medical and court accompaniment, and works with victims to help determine the most appropriate legal action. Facilitates support group for victims of sexual assault. Aids in prosecution of sexual violence cases by providing victim assistance.

### **Shenandoah Advocate and Outreach Coordinator**

Provides direct services to Shenandoah clients and coordinates outreach in Shenandoah.

### **Shelter Managers**

Ensure the shelter is safe, clean, and stocked. Conduct house meetings. Oversee the shelter nights and weekends. Provide crisis intervention, emotional support and advocacy to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

### **Children's Program Coordinator**

Provides direct services to children and teens who are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault. Provides information and education to parents who are currently in shelter. Provides education and outreach to the community about the dynamics of domestic violence and sexual assault. Facilitates a children's support group once a week.

### **Housing Coordinator**

Provides housing services to residents in the shelter. Completes all DHCD paper work for the Rapid Rehousing program. Assists residents in finding affordable housing. Works with landlords to provide information about the Rapid Rehousing Program.

### **Community/Volunteer Outreach Coordinator**

Coordinates community education, prevention, and outreach programs. Coordinates volunteer program.

### **Media Outreach Coordinator**

Part-time position focuses on media outreach in the community.

## **Board of Directors**

### **Officers**

Karen Riddle – Chairperson

Mary Menefee – Vice Chairperson

Brian Plum – Treasurer

Emily Seals – Secretary

Eleanor Ames – Co-secretary

### **Members**

Jessica Markowitz

Jerry Biller

Rev. Cathy Tibbetts

Patty Ross

Bow Cook

### **Staff**

Debra M. Dart	Executive Director
Robin Stevens	Services Coordinator
Lindy Swinson	Court Advocate
Tina Knupp	Sexual Assault Victim Advocate
Mary Rothgeb	Children Services Coordinator
Karen Marcum	Housing Coordinator
Sarah Warf	Shenandoah Advocate and Outreach Coordinator
Tracey Fox	Community/Volunteer Outreach Coordinator
Barbara Stewart	Media Outreach Coordinator, part-time
Jennifer Mayhew	Shelter Manager
Sarah Meaney	Shelter Manager
Edie Emmons	Shelter Manager
Tiffany Rothgeb	Shelter Manager

## **The History and Work of Choices, Council on Domestic Violence for Page County, Inc.**



Founded in 1986 by a small group of women concerned about the high incidence of in-home violence in Page County, Choices was truly a grass roots effort to help victims. All persons involved were volunteers and many opened their homes to provide refuge and support to women and children who survived violence.

This group also recognized the need for other services, such as court advocacy, information and referral, transportation, public education, and awareness. They sought grants and other funds that would help support services, and over the next ten years were successful in not only continuing to provide many services, but also funded some staff and other expenses. A part-time director, court advocate, and services

coordinator were hired and the list of caring volunteers grew.

As public awareness increased, so did the number of victims - many with children - who requested services. In early 1997, a building was located which would provide space for the first emergency shelter in Page County, along with room for office space for staff. This building, located at 216 West Main Street in Luray, was purchased with financial support from Virginia Department of Social Services and other smaller grantors. After extensive renovations, the shelter opened in September of 1997 and was at full capacity within days of opening. The need was very apparent for temporary shelter for women and children in Page County.

In August of 1998, a fire broke out in the shelter and all but gutted the interior of the building on both floors. Almost everything inside was destroyed, including files and computers. Work began quickly to renovate the building, with assistance from many sources, including insurance, private foundation grants, Department of Housing and Community Development and local support. With structural changes making better use of space, a brighter and safer shelter and offices re-opened in April of 1999.

Choices has come a long way since 1986, and has been successful in providing many services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. But without the determination, hard work, and caring of the people who first saw a need and wanted to help, Choices may never have been. The Choices staff, board and volunteers are grateful to those who care and want to make a difference in the lives of many individuals in Page County.

***Peace on Earth Begins at Home***