

Choices
Council on Domestic Violence
For
Page County, Inc.



Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2018

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www.choicesofpagecounty.org

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.

Choices Provided for the Safety and Protection of Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence and their Children in Page County

July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

Provided temporary 24-hour safe shelter to:

- 64 women
- 62 children
- Total of 3,401 bed nights, an average of 9 people every night of the year.

The above number combines the Luray shelter with efficiency apartment in Shenandoah.

Of the 64 families exiting the shelter this year:

2% went back home with their abuser

5% went home and their abuser was no longer present

55% went to stay with a relative or friend

3% were unknown

35% were able to obtain self-supported housing through the Rapid Rehousing Program administered by Choices

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

73% stayed fewer than 30 days

13% stayed 30 to 60 days

13% stayed 60 to 90 days

1% stayed over 90 days

Because of the services Choices provided:

100% of those receiving services said they knew **how to better plan for their safety.**

94% of those receiving services were **more hopeful about their future.**

99% of those receiving services said they **knew more about community services available to them.**

97% of those receiving services were **confident about their next steps.**

Choices asked those who received services to describe any positive experiences they had while receiving services. Here are a few responses:

“Because of all the support I received, I feel like I can overcome anything. I feel so confident”

“I have never in my life felt so supported. I can overcome anything.”

“I am living in my own place. I KNOW that I can provide a safe place for my children to grow up in.”

“I can stand on my own two feet!”

Client responses to: “What would you have done without the services Choices offered?”

38% would have lived in a car/tent/on the streets.

27% would have stayed with the abuser.

16% would have been depressed/hopeless.

15% had no idea what they would have done.

Choices provided advocacy to 665 individuals, empowering survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Demographics of those receiving services:

- 16% were men, 84% were women.
- 87% of those served were Caucasian, 5% African American, 3% were Hispanic, 1% were Native American and 4% were multi-racial.

Ages:

- 30% were under the age of 18, a 60% increase over last year.
- 9% were between the ages of 18 to 24.
- 39% were between the ages of 25 to 39.
- 5% were between the ages of 40 and 59.
- 17% were over the age of 60.

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

- 96% 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.
- 97% received emotional support.

Support Groups

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

Choices criminal justice staff assisted:

- 113 victims of domestic violence with court services.
- 81% were accompanied to court by a Choices advocate on criminal matters.
- 52% were helped with civil matters, including obtaining protective orders, filing for custody or visitation.

Choices responded to 447 calls on the 24-hour hotline.

- 79% of the calls were related to family violence.
- 17% of the calls were related to sexual assault.
- 04% 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 59 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 an Individual Services Plan to meet those needs.

Rapid Rehousing Program

Choices helped 17 adults and 20 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.

Two Case Herstories

ALICE

Alice called in a frantic state wanting shelter for her and her two children, ages 9 and 8. Alice's father, with whom they'd been living, was being investigated by Children's Protective Services for inappropriately touching Alice's 9-year old daughter. Alice was set to start a job within days of entering the shelter. Then she was pulled over for speeding and the police told her she had a suspended license. She did not have the paper work to prove that she had a restricted license. Her car was impounded and she couldn't get to her new job. Choices advocates helped her to get the necessary documentation to prove she was driving on a restricted license so that she could get her car back. Shelter managers gave Alice food, toiletries and other necessities. All staff provided peer counselling and information and referral. After a month in the Luray shelter, Alice obtained a job at a convenience store in the town of Shenandoah where Choices provided shelter. The Shenandoah advocate also counselled her, provided information and referral services, case management, and parenting skills development.

ALLIE

Allie has a long history of sexual and domestic violence and struggles with an alcohol use disorder. She retired from a university where she had a managerial position. She receives Social Security retirement and a small

pension from the university. She does not have health insurance. For a time, she was in a rehabilitation facility to restore independent living skills. After she completed the program she learned a family member had stolen enough of her money so that she could not afford housing. Allie came to Choices and received:

- Shelter
- Counseling to work through memories of domestic violence
- Counseling to assist in building her self-esteem after the emotional abuse she endured
- Court advocacy
- Referrals to assist with car repairs and obtaining medical coverage
- Referrals to assist her in her recovery from alcohol addiction
- Financial mentoring to establish and stick to a budget

ALL NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY

Choices gave 149 presentations to 2,903 children in Page County Public Schools, providing resources and tools to develop healthy relationships.

- 93 pre-school children learned that people will look different – glasses or not, small or tall, etc. – and that’s okay.
- 371 kindergarten students learned about feelings and how to show them.
- 362 first graders participated in activities that demonstrated, “Words Are Not for Hurting.” After the presentation, 100% of 1st graders were able to use kind words to compliment their classmates.
- 301 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.
- 412 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.
- 355 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 4th graders could name at least one strategy in dealing with a bully.
- 346 fifth grade students participated in activities that showed them how to set healthy boundaries with their friends. After the “Frenemies” presentations, 92% of the 5th grade students could identify one way to communicate healthy boundaries to a friend.
- 616 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.
- In addition to the above class room sessions, 47 Luray Middle School girls identified how to improve their self-esteem in nine once-a-month meetings of the “Girls Only Club.”



Volunteers Improved Services and Facilities for Clients

In FY '18, 43 volunteers gave a total of 857 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.

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
- Career Support Systems
- Strength in Peers

Highlights July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

- The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development audited Choices. They noted our record keeping showed clearly that services were being provided appropriately.

LURAY SHELTER IMPROVEMENTS

- Installed an electronic lock on the door to the courtyard, making the building more secure.
- Downstairs bathroom shower is now wheelchair accessible and easier for other clients with mobility issues to use.
- A washer and dryer were installed in the downstairs bathroom. Now, both floors of the shelter have everything that a family needs on their own level.
- Soffits and some guttering were replaced, reducing the chance for dangerous icicles to form and improving the building's soundness.
- The building exterior received a much-needed new coat of paint.
- Miller Coors' "Building Relationships, Empowering Women" remade the courtyard as a community service project. They removed the mulch and carefully set paving stones. They painted the porch and fence, replaced worn benches with new ones and added a chalk board for kids to draw on. To complete the new look, they added potted flowering plants.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH -DVAM – October 2017

- We distributed over 595 free purple ribbons and pins through the Luray- Page County Chamber of Commerce, Page and Kibler Libraries and the town offices of Stanley, Luray, and Shenandoah.
- Luray, Stanley and Shenandoah Police Departments displayed the purple ribbon magnets we provided on their vehicles.
- Four hundred DVAM flyers went out with the Luray – Page County Chamber of Commerce October newsletter.
- Luray and Page County High and Luray Middle School students created 23 works of art on the theme, "Peace on Earth Begins at Home." The Warehouse Art Gallery displayed the art October 21 – 29. The final day of the exhibit Choices hosted a reception with light refreshments.
- A Domestic Violence Awareness table was displayed at the Art Gallery with co-host United Way Page County on October 19th.
- The Luray High School Marching Bulldogs recognized DVAM by wearing purple wrist bands, provided by Choices, for their performances in October.

- Luray Bulldogs and Page Panthers Varsity Football players wore purple sweatbands, provided by Choices, in observance of DVAM.
- We placed Choices banners at Luray High Bulldog fields and Page County High School baseball fields. Banners remain up through most of the year.
- We made goody bags for law enforcement and court personnel to thank them for all they do.
- Choices reached out to the public at Luray Bulldog Field for the football game on Oct 20th.

SUPPORT AND AWARENESS

- Adelheid & Mike Osmer of South Court Inn hosted another successful and tasty Kaffee & Kuchen Fundraiser.
- A unique quilt was donated to Choices, raffled off for \$500, and donated back to Choices.
- Carrington Thompson, President of Hayden Hamilton Media Strategies, Inc., created with us and aired PSAs on his radio stations for April’s Sexual Assault Awareness Month, February’s Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month and January’s Stalking Awareness Month.
- Choices began a Pinterest account to help educate those who follow us about the dynamics of domestic violence.
- Choices’ April newsletter focused on sexual assault awareness and how young adults could embrace their voice in holding their peers accountable for normalizing sexual violence.
- Responding to clients’ declared needs, Choices started a support group in Stanley. Several clients have expressed interest in the group but to date, no one has attended. Advertisement of the support group is in the Page News & Courier, Facebook, and the town chamber newsletters.
- Choices supported Page County Public Schools’ “Meals on the Bus” summer feeding program by providing activities for the children.
- With community support Choices was able to provide Christmas presents to 17 children and to all shelter residents.

Grants and Major Contributors July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

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) \$383,349.00
- Domestic & Sexual Violence Victims Fund \$26,820.00
- Sexual Assault Services Program \$11,638.00

Other

- Virginia Department of Social Services \$149,853.00
- Warren & Katherine Coopersmith Foundation \$20,000.00
- Andersen Foundation Grant \$7,000.00

Local Government

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

Local Contributions

- Businesses \$3,017.00
- Churches \$8,941.00
- Fundraisers \$15,395.00
- Individual Donors \$34,035.00
- Organizations \$3,814.00

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 detailed FY '18 Financial Report may do so by contacting the Executive Director.

Services Provided by Choices

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 paraprofessionals 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 -2018

Officers

Mary Menefee – Chairperson, replacing Karen Riddle who resigned January 2018.

Eleanor Ames – Vice Chairperson, effective January 2018. Previously Co-Secretary.

Brian Plum – Treasurer

Emily Seals – Secretary

Members

Jerry Biller

Bow Cook

Gena Cook, starting January 2018

Caleb Routhier, starting January 2018

Rev. Cathy Tibbetts

Cathy Weaver, starting January 2018

Resignations – Chuck Butler, Jessica Markowitz, Patty Ross

Staff

Debra M. Dart

Executive Director

Robin Stevens

Services Coordinator

Lindy Swinson

Court Advocate

Tina Knupp

Sexual Assault Victim Advocate

Mary Rothgeb

Children's Services Coordinator through mid-June 2018

Barbie Jenkins	Children's Services Coordinator after mid-June 201
Karen Marcum	Housing Coordinator through mid-June 2018
Jacalyn Lee	Housing Coordinator after mid-June 2018
Sarah Warf	Shenandoah Advocate and Outreach Coordinator
Tracey Fox	Community/Volunteer Outreach Coordinator
Barbara Stewart	Media Outreach Coordinator, part-time
Edie Emmons	Shelter Manager through March 2018
Jennifer Mayhew	Shelter Manager
Sarah Meaney	Shelter Manager
Danielle McNeal	Shelter Manager after mid-May 2018
Mary Rothgeb	Shelter Manager after mid-June 2018
Tiffany Rothgeb	Shelter Manager through mid-May 2018



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