The Domestic Violence Action Center (DVAC) spent the year in motion. Again. We are committed to this motion to stay abreast of advancements in the field, in employing best practices and collaborating effectively with our community allies. Domestic violence remains a costly and complex community problem demanding the best from all of us. That places us in the center of political, economic and social discourse.

DVAC achieved some great things in fiscal year (FY) 2017. We rose to meet the demands of our clients and our community, and avert as many setbacks as possible. Staff was nimble, as always. The Board was engaged. Management served with as much innovative leadership as possible!

New programs, new funding sources, new collaborations defined the year for DVAC, complementing the many core initiatives that stand at the center of the agency’s services. A new logo was designed to facilitate a re-branding effort. We are a new DVAC!

“Having support made all the difference in the world. I was so scared, sitting alone, thoughts going wild in my head. So having someone walk me through this process was worth a million bucks. Thank you.”

Stay with us. Domestic violence shows no sign of abating. Imagery, messaging and social norms continue to reinforce the power and control dynamics tormenting families. DVAC’s work bringing safety to those suffering the harm of abuse, and peace to island families remains unduplicated and key to the pathway to a healthy community.
OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Domestic Violence Action Center is committed to ending domestic violence and other forms of abuse through leadership, prevention, legal services, individual and systemic advocacy and social change work. We believe all persons should be treated with equality, dignity and fairness. With high quality and culturally sensitive programs, delivered with integrity and compassion we are creating safety and self-sufficiency for survivors and their children.

AGENCY PROFILE

The Domestic Violence Action Center (DVAC) is dedicated to alleviating the problem of domestic abuse in Hawaii. We are the only agency in the State that accepts large numbers of high risk divorce, temporary restraining order, post-decree and paternity cases. We are also the only agency in the community with a full complement of services to assist as a survivor navigates the system and moves their life to freedom and self-sufficiency.

Through DVAC staff support, survivors are provided with court accompaniment and assistance in securing financial support, pursuing educational goals, obtaining child support, and maneuvering the military, medical or mental health systems. DVAC services are designed to empower survivors and bring them closer to the goals of safety and self-sufficiency.

Founded in 1990 and incorporated in 1991, DVAC has grown from a legal helpline with 2 part-time staff to a team of 48 compassionate and persistent advocates, attorneys, leaders and change makers. Training and education, technical assistance and community building, direct services and public awareness are among the commitments the agency sustains in service to the people of Hawaii.

DVAC staff is deeply involved at the community level and participates in working committees coordinated by government agencies such as the Department of the Attorney General, the Honolulu City Council, the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women, the Access to Justice Commission and the First Judicial Circuit. Staff is represented on the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team, the Men’s March Steering Committee, the Violence Against Women Planning Committee, the Legal Services Provider Consortium, and the Language Access Advisory Committee.

We also work collaboratively with local associations and agencies including the Hawaii State Bar Association, the Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Hawaii Association of Non-Profit Organizations, the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii and Prevent Child Abuse Hawaii. DVAC’s relationships with other agencies and community leaders have always been a high priority of management.

DVAC has three departments overseeing direct services, community engagement and administration. Program staff provides outreach in civil and criminal court, with referrals coming from many community programs and public agencies. The agency seeks and accepts invitations to encourage the community to learn about the organization’s unique services provided by expert staff trained on the needs and challenges facing survivors of abuse. DVAC’s target population includes youth, immigrants, adult survivors and their children.

The fee structure for legal services is designed to be affordable, with a sliding fee scale and payment plans in place. A Fee Waiver committee reviews circumstances where a survivor is challenged to pay fees; decisions about reduced fees or waivers of fees are made. Training and technical assistance is also fee-based while court outreach is available to every survivor seeking court protection or appearing as a witness in a criminal case.

The agency’s areas of expertise include: client advocacy, crisis support, safety planning, risk assessments, accompaniments to appointments, legal representations, education in the classroom, professional training, community organizing and participation in community efforts to reform the system to become more responsive to the needs of survivors.

DVAC’s capacity to raise its voice, advocate for justice, and offer commentary on survivors’ pressing needs cannot be overstated. We have learned, however, long ago, that the job is bigger than we are. And we are earnest in our belief that it is going to take all of us. Domestic violence goes with survivors to work, and with children to school. Every sector has a role to play and it has been our mission to help them see that role.
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Hawaii Children's Trust Fund
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Hawaii Department of the Attorney General
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Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA)
Hawaii State Bar Foundation
Hawaii State Judiciary
Indigent Legal Assistance Fund
Kaiser Foundation
Kosasa Foundation
Legal Aid Society of Hawaii
Prevent Child Abuse Hawaii
The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
The Keith & Judy Swayne Family Foundation
University of Hawaii Foundation
Women’s Fund of Hawaii

Fiscal Year 2017 Revenue & Expenses

In FY 2017, DVAC submitted 30 grant and award applications. 22 were awarded, 3 were denied and 5 are still pending.

Revenue

- State of Hawaii: $1,763,149.00
- Federal: $689,633.00
- Foundation/Other Grants: $419,032.00
- City and County: $242,929.00
- Community Support: $219,218.00
- Client: $15,472.00

Expenses

- Fundraising Expense: $37,233.00
- Operations: $459,579.00
- Program Services: $2,620,582.00

Changes in Net Assets: $232,039.00
Net Assets at Beginning of Year: $4,514,562.00
Net Assets at End of Year: $4,746,601.00
Client Programs

DVAC’s array of client and community programs is built from the knowledge gained through 27 years of service to the community. The agency remains positioned to serve island families with sophisticated, compassionate, and unduplicated programs. New opportunities present themselves, enhancing the core services at the center of DVAC’s reliable response to partner abuse in our diverse community. Domestic violence and child abuse are often co-occurring, tormenting the family in ways many cannot fathom. Staff at DVAC sees the torment, listens with an open heart, assists in navigating complex paths to safety, and brings families to new stability.

The addition of a Helpline Specialist to the staffing pattern has been a boon to quality and efficiency. Responsive support and information over the phone is often a key first step for a person contemplating their options and understanding the risks they are facing. DVAC’s Helpline answered 2,353 calls in FY 2017. For others, meeting an attentive, well-informed and supportive DVAC EXPO advocate in civil or criminal court is, in the voices of survivors, a lifesaving, uplifting presence. In FY 2017, EXPO staff provided outreach to a total of 1,838 victims at the time they sought protection from Family Court, either at the ex parte stage or the Order to Show Cause (OSC) hearing. Survivors seeking a restraining order are at elevated risk of violence; EXPO staff assisted in the completion of 1,293 safety plans at the OSC stage and accompanied 194 victims into the court hearing. “Having support made all the difference in the world. I was so scared, sitting alone, thoughts going wild in my head. So having someone walk me through this process was worth a million bucks. Thank you.”

“My EXPO advocate] was amazing at helping me when I was having issues with my TRO filing. She educated me about the TRO process, provided excellent emotional support and ensured my safety. She was vital in helping me bring my children back to Hawaii. Thank you.”

The DVAC Ala Ka’i advocacy team is well known for its extraordinary long-term support for survivors on their path to safety and promise. Abuse and harassment doesn’t end at the moment a relationship ends, a TRO is in effect, or a divorce is filed. There is a seemingly unending stream of challenges, setbacks and decisions to be made on that transformative journey. Ala Ka’i is present for all of it. Work with clients continues for as long as it takes. In FY 2017, advocates opened 399 cases and closed 217 cases. Advocates throughout the agency made 1,264 accompaniments to appointments for financial assistance, mental health support, housing assistance, court hearings, and other meetings with community agencies.

Through the formal agreement with the Japanese Consulate, DVAC opened 29 cases serving Japanese national survivors. All advocacy programs conduct safety planning with survivors and in 2017, DVAC staff completed 5,770 safety plans.

The DVAC legal team maintained its robust and unduplicated “DV lawyering” – keeping the needs of trauma of survivors in sharp focus, advocating for their best interests and safety. Attorneys made 323 court appearances on behalf of agency clients. They opened 441 cases and closed another 301 cases.

Two new advocacy programs were born in FY 2017. Safe on Scene (SOS), a partnership with the Honolulu Police Department, enables the victims who had police intervention to benefit from compassionate and spirited advocacy at the time of police response. That crisis is startling. SOS advocates reduce the panic and allow the officers to handle the investigation and pursue the suspect. SOS advocates made 219 on-scene visits, 497 referrals and 85 follow-up calls to survivors. The Campus Survivor Advocacy Program (CSAP), in partnership with the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) at the University of Hawaii, assists students suffering the harm of abuse on site at Oahu community colleges. These advocates’ support to students (on campus, in community and in court) increases the likelihood of academic success. After extensive Title IX training provided by OIE, CSAP advocates opened 24 cases. Students come to DVAC through a variety of routes (Helpline, EXPO, campus referrals) and advocates can meet with students on their campus for convenience. The advocates are also a resource for faculty and administration.

Two programs, funded by the Family Violence Prevention Services Discretionary grant
Community

DVAC is uniquely positioned to advance the community’s understanding and investment in the safety of our island families. The media remains interested and pursued comment from DVAC on all issues pertaining to abuse, policy making, system response and particular incidents. 2017 upheld that tradition. DVAC was featured on all television stations, Hawaii Public Radio and in the Star Advertiser. The educated involvement by our press is imperative for enhanced community awareness. With their help, myths and misconceptions can be dispelled.

DVAC participated in the Gay Pride Parade and the Martin Luther King Parade. Booths and marchers were present for both. For the 22nd year, DVAC played a key role in the coordination of a successful Men’s March Against Violence in October 2016.

DVAC programs have also used other avenues to disseminate information about programs and agency work. A piece was published in the Hawaii Independent about Ho’okuika ‘Ohana. Island Scene (HMSA publication) also included a piece about the important work of this program. DVAC’s CEO facilitated a workshop session at the Access to Justice Summit, Tangled Path to Access for Survivors, with a longtime ally and domestic violence expert in the legal community, Lynne McGivern, a partner at Ashford and Wriston.

Staff participated in the Women’s Coalition to facilitate the proposal and passage of responsive legislation. To no avail. System reform work is needed and will always be an aspect of DVAC’s efforts; all of our clients are exposed to the system’s shortcomings and often experience re-victimization as a result. DVAC participated in Hawaii’s Fatality Review process, and joined other members in the planning, and ultimately the coordination of a one
Work
day training, Fundamentals of Domestic Violence, for 150 county and state workers on Oahu.

DVAC has been involved in the work to assess Hawaii’s needs for improving access to justice and coordinated one of the first TalkStory sessions to listen to the voices of those who sought assistance from the justice system. In our case, DVAC brought together survivors who had encountered civil and criminal justice system proceedings. DVAC was invited by Kaiser Permanente to provide a training for their insurance clients to better equip businesses to understand domestic violence in their workplace. DVAC provided a training session to healthcare practitioners (Nurse Leaders, Clinic Supervisors and Obstetric Gynecology staff) so every patient, every time is provided the opportunity to seek help at their medical appointment. DVAC has been participating in the extensive discussion about the need for a domestic violence intervention program in Department of Public Safety facilities, for inmates who have a history of domestic violence or who are incarcerated for domestic violence.

DVAC continued to play a key role in sharing the work done locally, and in bringing back information to further strengthen intervention and preventative efforts in Hawaii. In FY 2017, DVAC took part in the Equal Justice for All and National Organization for Women conferences.

Heart to Heart, a mother daughter luncheon, supported by Bill Rizzo of Guild Mortgage, created an opportunity for moms and girls to learn about dating abuse, its warning signs, and ways to communicate effectively about challenges. They also enjoyed a photo booth, crafting, music and shopping to underscore the value of having one another in times of need. Junior League shared exquisite event planning talent, time and swag. DVAC hosted Art After Dark in February 2017. This successful event at the Honolulu Museum of Art (HMA) gave the agency the opportunity to raise awareness of domestic violence and DVAC’s work for a large and diverse crowd.

DVAC also benefited from the Museum’s extensive promotion in the community, on social media, etc., throughout the year. Alex and Ani partnered with DVAC for a shopping event. The sale was promoted through their business channels and to community supporters. It has always been DVAC’s commitment to increase partnerships with the business sector to raise awareness and raise funding.

Bloomingdales dedicated one of their Fiesta Friday staff luncheons to DVAC and invited us to meet and introduce the agency’s programs. This was an opportunity to acquaint employees with the problem of domestic violence.

DVAC’s CEO departed from the Board of Directors of the Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence after 35 years participating (she was a founding member). Before her departure, she had been serving as Board Chair for the second time.
DVAC saw the retirement of one of its longtime executive management team members this year. With vision and compassion, Cindy Iannce Spencer had served the community in the name of DVAC for 20 years. Her departure paved the way for an organizational restructuring, and a Deputy Director position was created. This position is new to the organization and its full and best use remains in development. Marci Lopes, former Executive Director of the Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and program director at Parents and Children Together has stepped into the role.

Human Resources policy and practice has been under careful review with employee onboarding and orientation enhanced to increase staff success. A revised Personnel Handbook will be distributed to all staff in early FY 2018. A tremendous commitment was made this year to staff training. All employees participated in a 4 session series, Risking Connections, focused on trauma-informed delivery of services and organizational practice. All staff also attended a 4 session training focused on effective and appropriate support for LGBTQ survivors. DVAC conducted an organizational assessment to improve inclusivity and update agency forms and language to be aligned with best practice. DVAC’s DV101 training curriculum was carefully reviewed and revised to include new content, as well as the participation of additional staff members.

DVAC also bolstered its commitment to staff wellness and safety. A Wellness Committee was established in May 2017, with the mission to create opportunities for staff to care for themselves and each other. Meditation, yoga, healthy breakfasts and a wellness community garden are all on the Committee’s agenda for FY 2018. The agency’s Safety Committee stepped up efforts to ensure staff and client safety in the office, at court and in the community. In April 2017, Safety Committee members organized a training and Safety Jeopardy game for all staff to review the procedures in place to keep them safe.

The agency’s Leadership Team met regularly to digest the agency’s approach to its work, with a focus on strengthening leadership beyond management roles within the agency. Support from the Islander Institute was a great boon to the team’s commitment to lead at DVAC and in the community.

The Board of Directors sustained a spirited level of activity in their governance and development. They met in Retreat to affirm the agency’s goals and objectives through the conception of a Priority Plan for 2016 – 2019.
The Board’s work to cement a strong Communications plan and an innovative Development plan led to joint meetings of the two Board committees to imagine and design ways to elevate visibility, with the goal of increasing private support. Major Gifts planning and Legacy giving were areas of attention for management and Board; the Safe Futures Fund was further developed and a Gifts campaign was conceived.

A re-build of the agency’s website has taken a great deal of focus. Volunteers selected through CatchAFire were central to this process and have yielded mixed outcomes. The work now continues into FY 2018, on a small budget. The website launch is scheduled to coincide with DV Awareness Month in October 2018. TAP also enjoyed the design of a new website for more effective and broader use, with accessible, relevant, and age-appropriate content for teens.

The agency decided that a new database was necessary to upgrade the current system for capturing client information. The current system compels clients to retell their stories to multiple staff and makes it difficult to capture trends for reporting and agency and community planning. The transition to a new data management system, CAP60, is currently underway.

Breathing renewed energy into the agency’s work, DVAC has reviewed all agency print materials for reproduction with the new agency logo. New programs developed brochures for dissemination to the community, also with the new logo.

“They guided me, supported me, counseled me and protected me. My daughter and I are safe and living peacefully because of their work.”
The upcoming year holds continuing promise for good work and inspired advocacy. The agency’s partnerships in the community will continue to grow. Programs will strengthen to meet the complex needs of survivors and their families. FY 2018 will be the second year of funding support for three of our new programs, PIKO, CSAP and SOS. After development and staffing recruitment has stabilized, the second year is potent for the delivery of responsive services.” and ADD Space/section break after “responsive services.

New events to raise awareness and expand collaborations will be implemented. Feast for Peace and Pau Hana for A Purpose will launch in the early part of the year. These initiatives extend our relationships in the business community and invites young professionals to gain a better understanding of partner violence as it impacts their lives, and their community.

DVAC will unveil its new framework for major gifts, strategically seeking support for survivor, community and organizational needs and stabilization. The agency is also committed and determined to anchor its Safe Futures Fund for long-term sustainability.

Family violence shows no sign of abating. We begin and end every year with the rich and earnest conviction that we are here to help, giving birth to new ideas of best ways to help and refining our organizational practices to be of absolute help.
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