We ebb and flow with the tide and while the depths are inevitable we rise above the water – and soar.

— Anonymous
Hope endured as we navigated forward through streams of rapid changes, requiring us to continue adapting. We, too, persisted – we advocated for additional resources, expanded options to meet the needs of survivors and continued our commitment to work toward dismantling racism. Our community and supporters rallied around us. Through collaborating with local and state partners, various organizations and news media to spread the word, we made it known domestic violence is a community issue, and it deserves a community response.

While our work looked different in many ways this year, through it all, we are still here. We are still standing. We are still moving the mission to end domestic violence forward, and remain determined and hopeful as we continue our tireless advocacy for survivors and their families.

Onward, together!

March 28, 2020, the day Rhode Island’s stay-at-home order went into effect, marked a before and after in the life of this generation. The year 2020 has challenged our collective resilience. The waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, the outcry for racial and social justice sparked by the unjust murders of Black people and the calls for help from domestic violence victims trapped in their homes weighed heavily on our hearts. Yet, from the depths of sorrow and injustice, hope soared and prevailed.

For victims of domestic violence, COVID-19 was a crisis layered over another crisis. The pandemic exacerbated abuse and the needs of survivors. Hope persevered through the passion and commitment of advocates who worked on the front lines to serve victims and their families. Through the unwavering dedication of advocates who never gave up and our staff, we were able to continue services and shine a light on the public health crisis of domestic violence.

“To me, being a survivor means using my experience to help others know they are not alone and do not deserve to be abused in any way.”

— Laura, SOMR member

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Onward, together!

Tonya King Harris
Executive Director

Janet Marcantonio
President,
Board of Directors
Throughout the year, the RICADV’s network of member agencies worked to advocate for and support those in our communities who are impacted by domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence and stalking. These organizations provide a vast array of services including emergency shelter, support groups, counseling and assistance with the legal system. We thank their staff, board members and volunteers for their ongoing commitment to serving survivors of abuse and their children.

We also want to note changes in our member agency membership, as McAuley Ministries has become a new affiliate member of the RICADV and Sojourner House is no longer a member of the RICADV network.

The RICADV ended the fiscal year in a strong financial position, closing its financial books on June 30, 2020, with a positive change in unrestricted net assets from operations of $5,465.

- Total operating revenues and support were $5,254,851. Eighty-three percent of the funds came from federal grants and contracts, 12% came from the State of Rhode Island and 5% came from foundations, corporate support, individual donations, community groups, dues and training fees.

- Total operating expenses were $5,249,386. Of the total expenses, 68%, or $3,569,721, consisted of funds passed through our member agencies, primarily for the provision of direct services to victims of domestic violence.

The RICADV conducts an annual audit in accordance with the U.S. Office of Management and Budget Uniform Grant Guidance.

### Services

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### 2020 MAJOR FUNDING SOURCES

- Allstate Foundation
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (DELTA Impact)
- Rhode Island Bar Foundation (IOLTA Program)
- Rhode Island Department of Human Services
- Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families
- Rhode Island Foundation
- State of Rhode Island
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
  - Family Violence Prevention and Services Act
- U.S. Department of Justice,
  - Victims of Crime Act
- U.S. Department of Justice,
  - Violence Against Women Act
- Women’s Fund of Rhode Island

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**Strength is something survivors have an abundance of. You need strength to survive every day. You are strong because you have survived the relationship, and you can survive – and thrive – afterwards, after the relationship has ended.”**

— Zaida, SMAR member
The RICADV’s 2020 policy and advocacy work began with a training session in January for all Rhode Island District Court judges. The training was a collaboration between the Center for Court Innovation (CCI), a technical assistance provider for the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women, R.I. District Court and the RICADV. RICADV staff presented the training along with expert attorneys from CCI specialized in domestic violence courts and lethality and danger risk factors. These were initial steps toward the goal of implementing a dedicated, specialized high-risk “DV Court” in Rhode Island.

As the COVID-19 pandemic led to historic surges in calls to the statewide Helpline, we switched course to respond immediately and engaged in targeted advocacy to ensure victims had the services they needed.

We advocated with statewide partners in the courts, human services, housing field and state government to make sure resources remained available and survivors had the additional support needed to weather the storm of the public health and economic crisis.

We led a public awareness campaign to inform Rhode Islanders that the network of member agencies serving domestic violence survivors and their families, shelters and advocates were still there to help during difficult times.

Our strong partnership and COVID-19 response collaboration with the Office of the Governor provided survivors and their children access to additional emergency services, shelter and housing options with federal CARES Act funds and other invaluable resources throughout the pandemic.

The governor’s efforts to make the statewide Helpline number and online chat visible – and share important information during her daily press briefings and through online forums – were essential for families and children impacted by domestic violence during the pandemic.

The ocean is my healing place. I survived the storm of yesterday. I am safe, I am at peace, I can soar.”

— Cali, SOAR member
SOAR (Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships)

This year, the pandemic did not slow the momentum and energy of SOAR members, and the task force of survivors found creative ways to engage in public awareness efforts and systems change work from home, in spite of the challenges caused by COVID-19.

This included speaking on virtual panels and at online events, writing letters to the editor for news publications, publishing blog posts on the SOAR website, collaborating together on letters to state leaders and responding to questions from the public through community Q&A videos.

SOAR members advocated to increase funding for the Crime Victim Compensation Program, improve access to affordable housing options, raise the amount for assistance benefits through RI Works, improve financial stability through an increased minimum wage and financial literacy and dedicate coronavirus relief funds to support survivors through shelter and housing options.

In June, four SOAR members shared some of these calls-to-action during virtual advocacy meetings with the R.I. congressional delegation during the National Network to End Domestic Violence Advocacy Day.

In September, a SOAR-sponsored event series launched, centering the voices and perspectives of survivors in community training and education. SOAR also presented two events to the community in collaboration with experts, focusing on fostering resilience in children who witness domestic violence and understanding the impact of trauma on financial decision-making.

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The RICADV’s 2020 training calendar series transitioned from in-person trainings to online webinars to allow for at-home learning. We revamped our training calendar to provide basic and advanced workshops about domestic violence as well as professional development, including trainings to broaden leadership skills and grant writing expertise. We also hosted trainings with two nationally renowned experts – Alicia Aiken, director of the Danu Center’s Confidentiality Institute, and Jill Davies, deputy director of Greater Hartford Legal Aid.

We partnered with the Women’s Resource Center, Progreso Latino, the Center for Southeast Asians, the Refugee Dream Center and Tri-Town Community Action Agency’s D/deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Victim of Crime Advocacy Program to share financial advocacy with the individuals these organizations serve, thanks to funding from The Allstate Foundation.

We continued to gather advocates of color in the movement to end domestic violence to build community, provide peer support and expand leadership of people of color within the movement.

I used to think the abuse made me weaker or that I was broken because of it. However, I know now that surviving, leaving and dealing with PTSD from domestic violence are the strongest, bravest things I’ve ever done.”

– Haley, SOAR member

Community Engagement

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- 14 presentations this year
- 300 people reached live in (virtual or in-person) audiences
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Audiences included advocates in the movement to end domestic abuse, housing and economic fields, lawmakers and legislators, students, community members and more.

11 media interviews worked on by Soar
6,500 views on Soar’s blog, increasing community engagement with posts written by Soar members since April
This year underscored the need for primary prevention, which aims to stop domestic violence before it starts by addressing root causes of abuse. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified risk factors for domestic violence, including social isolation and economic insecurity, and magnified the inequities that exist in our state. With COVID-19 funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the RICADV prioritized community-led prevention strategies in response to the pandemic, partnering with four organizations led by and for communities of color – ARISE (Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education), Progreso Latino, SISTA Fire and Youth In Action.

This year called on us to deepen our commitment to the transformational change needed to create an equitable, peaceful world. In that spirit, we are amplifying the voices and efforts of these organizations to change the conditions in our communities contributing to domestic violence.

The RICADV played a leadership role on the Rhode Island Commission for Health Advocacy and Equity and served on the COVID-19 Equity Council. We participated on public policy coalitions to strengthen economic supports for families, including Raising RI and Raise the Bar on Resident Care. Ten Men shifted to a virtual model in the spring, with June marking the completion of our eighth annual cohort. The Deborah DeBare Domestic Violence Prevention Fund supported six community-led projects to address urgent needs and develop innovative methods for engaging youth and adults throughout the pandemic.

We continued to support member agency and longstanding prevention partner, Women’s Resource Center (WRC), through our CDC DELTA Impact funding. Serving as the backbone agency of the Newport Health Equity Zone (HEZ), WRC works with local residents and community stakeholders to promote green and open space in the North End of Newport, with the RICADV evaluating this prevention strategy. The Newport HEZ fosters resident leadership in efforts to ensure the needs and wellbeing of current residents are at the heart of the plans and decisions affecting their neighborhoods.

Public Awareness

During a year where the visibility of life-saving services and stepping up as a community to address the needs of survivors was more critical than ever, the RICADV’s communications efforts maintained constant news media coverage, developed a comprehensive COVID-19 response information center on the RICADV’s website and provided communications support for a multitude of virtual events and initiatives – including a statewide town hall with Gov. Gina Raimondo, the R.I. delegation and other state leaders and advocates. Through collaborating with news media and state partners, the statewide Helpline number was displayed continuously during the governor’s press briefings and newscasts, and information about services – letting survivors and their families know “we are here, we are open,” despite the pandemic – was seen in headlines, broadcast segments and distributed among state and community groups for months.

While meeting the intense communications demands during the pandemic from local and national news outlets as well as state partners, the RICADV, in partnership with the member agencies, also developed several public awareness campaigns including a new campaign for National Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) in October and partnered with our sponsor, Cox Communications.

The campaign called the community in to “Know the Signs” and learn more about subtle and overlooked forms of abuse, because as the campaign call-to-action notes, “It’s on all of us to end domestic violence.” Survivors’ stories were shared on social media, radio, Pandora and TV public service announcements were broadcast in English and Spanish and billboards and ads were displayed throughout the state. Video, radio and print media interview series were published via Rhode Informa, local radio stations and The Providence Journal, and the RICADV hosted a campaign kick-off event where SOAR (Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships) held a Q&A panel to address questions from the community.

“Surviving domestic violence take a village. Keep letting survivors know you are there for whatever they need, even if it’s just to listen.”

– Kristi, SOAR member

Prevention
Thank You

We would like to thank the members of our staff and board of directors who transitioned from the RICADV in 2020:

Staff: Lee Clasper-Torch, Ezra Guay
Board: Kyle Bennett, Neal McNamara, Ramona Rodriguez-Mejia, Vanessa Volz

We would like to thank our interns, Daphney Coriolan, Ally Huzyk, Gabriella Mamet, Laila Mirza and Dee Nedder. We also thank Loretta Kennedy, art director, and Giselle Gallo, graphic designer, for their creative vision and steadfast work on several RICADV projects this year.

We dedicate our 2020 annual report to the advocates of the RICADV’s member agencies who worked directly and unwaveringly with survivors and their families throughout the pandemic, and the hundreds of thousands who lost their lives to COVID-19.

Board of Directors

Janet Marcantonio, president
Rilwan Feyisitan, Jr., vice president
Toni Marie Gomes, treasurer
Jessica Walsh, secretary
Jim Berson
Judith Earle
Mak Falaye
Terrence Green
Jennifer Meade
Mary Rida
Damaries Roman
Michele Wilcox

Concept and layout design created by Loretta Kennedy with support from the RICADV staff.
ENGAGING TEENS
The RICADV launches the Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month campaign, engaging R.I. teens and youth to promote healthy relationships.

PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BEFORE IT STARTS
Deborah DeBare Domestic Violence Prevention Fund (DVPF) grantee organizations, funded through the RICADV, begin working on long-term projects focusing on changing policies, community conditions and harmful norms to prevent domestic abuse before it starts. Short-term community micro-grants funded by the RICADV also launch, starting work on projects that foster and increase community cohesion through public awareness, education and the arts.

RICADV WORK GOES VIRTUAL
The RICADV shifts to virtual platforms and begins working remotely during the pandemic. The RICADV’s trainings shift to online-only, including sessions by two nationally-recognized experts, Jill Davies and Alicia Aiken.

HEIGHTENED ADVOCACY
The RICADV shifts and expands its statewide advocacy efforts to meet intensified needs of survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic through tireless advocacy on various programs and initiatives.

STATE-LEVEL RESPONSE
Governor Gina Raimondo starts elevating the issue of domestic violence, prioritizing the needs of survivors and noting the statewide Helpline number in her press briefings, and announces a plan to address the domestic abuse during the pandemic.

IN THE NEWS
Reporters and news outlets continue sharing information about RICADV resources for victims of domestic violence, helping get the word out to survivors and bystanders alike that despite the pandemic, “we are here, we are open” to support the community.

CALLING R.I. MEN IN
The RICADV launches the June public awareness campaign, calling R.I. men in to help end domestic violence through culture change.

CLICK TO LEARN MORE
2020 AT A GLANCE

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY
Through funding from the CDC, the RICADV partners with organizations ARISE (Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education), Progreso Latino, SISTA Fire and Youth in Action, led by and for communities of color, working to change conditions in our communities that contribute to violence and inequity.

EXPANDED SERVICES
The RICADV announces the expansion of services for survivors, including Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center’s expanded catchment area.

KNOW THE SIGNS
The RICADV launches a new public awareness campaign for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, calling the community in to “know the signs” of abuse because “It’s on all of us to end domestic violence.”

INCREASED SHELTER CAPACITY
Through state and community partnerships, the RICADV works to expand emergency shelter capacity.

RICADV RAISES FUNDS FOR SERVICES
Thanks to the support of our partners, the RICADV raises over $884,600 which is distributed to the member agencies to fund direct services for victims of domestic violence and their families by the end of the year.
The RICADV would like to honor the lives of Rhode Island victims of domestic violence homicides in 2020:

Erika Belcourt
Derek Desjardin
Tanya Gagnon
Kristine Ohler
Vincent A. Sebastian
Cheryl Smith
Paul Zois

In Memoriam