



PARTNERS' PATH TO THE FUTURE

Partners for Women and Justice

just wrapped up its 15th year of helping victims and survivors of domestic violence escape abuse. Many of you have been with us since the beginning and have seen us grow, increase the number of clients we serve, and expand the geographical area in which we work. In 2017, the Board of Trustees decided it was important to reflect on our current work while looking to the future. And so the board and staff spent six months working on a strategic plan, and we are excited to share with you the priorities adopted by the board to guide the organization going forward and to position it for long-term sustainability.

We remain deeply committed to our mission to provide individualized legal services to victims of domestic violence, which research shows can make the difference between securing a restraining order and not. Partners will continue to offer its current scope of direct services (domestic violence restraining orders, custody and child support matters) in the geographies it now serves. But we will leverage our experience and knowledge in new ways.

Our 2017-2020 strategic priorities

are a combination of external and internal initiatives, all meant to enable Partners to increase its impact while planning for the future:

broaden partners' impact

- We know that the demand for Partners' direct services will continue to outstrip our capacity to assist all of those in need, so we will leverage our experience and knowledge to increase our emphasis on advocacy in order to address the systemic legal problems faced by victims of domestic violence.

build and strengthen institutional infrastructure

- To maintain high quality legal services while evolving our advocacy program, we must improve and reinforce our infrastructure. Partners will accomplish this by adding staff where necessary, upgrading and/or acquiring appropriate technology, software and equipment, maintaining a suitable physical working environment, and improving job satisfaction and employee retention.

ensure an orderly and timely leadership transition

- Although there are no changes planned for our leadership team, we must develop and have in place a formal succession plan that ensures a timely and orderly leadership transition.

grow and diversify partners' base of support

- To ensure sustained financial stability as it seeks to deepen its impact, Partners must expand its sources of support as well as increase the levels of unrestricted funding. The implementation of a donor-centric communications plan is critical to strengthening the depth of connections with donors.

ADVOCACY

Pretrial Safety Project

Partners' Pre-Trial Safety Project seeks to reduce domestic violence-related homicides and to safeguard victims and their children after an abuser has been arrested. With criminal justice reforms that became effective in 2017, New Jersey now bases pretrial release and detention decisions, not on whether someone can post bail, but on whether the defendant poses a risk to the community or individuals. The courts use a Public Safety Assessment tool to decide whether a defendant should be released or detained pending trial, but the tool does not factor in risks unique to victims of domestic violence. The Pre-Trial Safety Project seeks to address this gaping hole in the process. In at least three cases since the reform, a victim of domestic violence has been murdered by her abuser after he was released pending trial. Partners will advocate for the use of better tools to guide and inform judicial decision-making in domestic violence cases.



In the Courts

In the trenches every day, our attorneys and paralegals have a unique perspective on the challenges victims of domestic violence face in navigating the legal system. Informed by that perspective, Partners will continue to advocate for court practices and procedures that reduce barriers for victims, particularly those who are on their own without any knowledge of the procedural or substantive law applicable to domestic violence. Partners will be their voice in advocating for systemic improvements that enhance justice for all.



Child Support Initiative

Readily available and dependable court-ordered child support is essential to enable victims with children to end their abusive relationships and achieve long-term safety. Victims often have trouble obtaining adequate support orders, and when support goes unpaid, getting those orders enforced can be a Herculean task. These challenges can overwhelm custodial parents who do not have access to counsel. Low-income families in New Jersey need a child support system that meets their children's financial needs. That's why Partners is launching the **Child Support Initiative**. Partners will advocate for systemic improvements in the way child support orders are calculated and enforced to foster financial independence.

In the Legislature

We will keep an eye on proposed legislation – mainly at the state level – that would have an impact on victims of domestic violence. We will educate legislators about the unintended consequences of their proposals that could be harmful to victims. Likewise, we will educate them on the benefits of new laws that enhance the safety of victims. At the federal level, we will monitor the status of the substantial annual federal funding that supports national and grass roots organizations serving victims of domestic violence.