

Thank you to the over 500 motorcyclists who participated in this year's Toy Run! Because of your generosity, the families we serve will receive gifts this Christmas! * We are still accepting donations for gifts until Christmas. *



Thank you to Bath and Body employees for a generous donation of hygiene and personal care items for our clients!



We have an urgent need for coats at DVACK. As temperatures continue to drop, clients are in need of warm coats and jackets for themselves and their children.



Our Current Needs:

Thoughts from an Advocate

The following thoughts are from Advocate, Courtney T., talking about the many challenges our clients deal with routinely. We, as an agency, are constantly striving to help our clients meet these needs but often we seek help from other resources or agencies. If you know of a way you can assist our clients, feel free to reach out to us.

Domestic violence survivors face complex barriers to escaping abusive relationships and becoming independent. Here are prominent needs of survivors:

Accessible Childcare: Survivors need affordable, accessible, and quality childcare. Currently, the Kansas Department for Children and Families only offers childcare assistance to qualifying families who have been employed for two weeks. However, for survivors who have been isolated from friends and family, they do not have a support system to help with childcare during the first two weeks of employment. Qualifying families need to be able to receive childcare assistance starting their first day of employment.

Living Wage: Due to the isolation and control by abusive partners, survivors typically are unable to advance in their education or seek employment, making it difficult for them to obtain jobs that pay a living wage. To rebuild one's life, feel safe and secure, and have options, survivors need living wages. The federal minimum wage does not align with the cost of living. A significant increase in the federal minimum wage and the minimum wage for tipped employees is necessary for survivors and working families to be able to meet their basic needs.

Safe Housing: With limited housing options, survivors may not see a way out of their abusive relationships. Survivors need transitional housing and affordable rentals or houses. Abusive partners often destroy property as a means to intimidate and control survivors. Abusive partners cause damage to homes, wreck survivors' credit scores, and force survivors into debt. Because of this, landlords are, understandably, hesitant renting to survivors. Protections are needed for survivors seeking safe housing to ensure that they are able to access safe and affordable housing. Survivors may also benefit from transitional housing options. Transitional housing is the step between an emergency safe shelter and a rental home, and it allows survivors and their families to have an opportunity to live in their own space (compared to living in a communal space and sharing rooms and household items with strangers) and learn life skills while still having access to community supports and free or affordable housing.

Responsive Legal System: From an advocate's perspective, the U.S. legal system is not designed to support survivors of abuse. This is no one's fault, per se; however, acknowledgement of the legal system's limits and barriers validates survivors' experiences and opens the conversation on how to improve our legal system to better protect and serve survivors. From reporting to testifying, survivors may experience judgment, ridicule, intimidation, traumatization, confusion, embarrassment, helplessness, and hopelessness. Survivors do not feel safe to report, attend court, or testify against the person who has been abusing, controlling, threatening, and manipulating them, as this person is someone the survivor has invested their life into. Our legal system requires "the right to a fair trial" and "cross examination," as well as "innocent until proven guilty." This means that the survivor, whether a child who has been sexually abused by a parent or an adult who has been brutally assaulted by their partner of 10 years, has to face their abuser, often a loved one who can paralyze their victim just by looking at them. Thus, it is often easier and safer for survivors to not participate in the legal system. Because these crimes typically happen in private with no witnesses, survivors tend to not have "evidence" of the crimes they experience. For a variety of reasons, perpetrators of abuse also rarely face criminal charges or jailtime even if there is evidence, so survivors are at risk of facing violence during and after the court process for "humiliating" their abuser and "stepping out of bounds." Furthermore, the court process typically lasts months to years, and every time the survivor goes to court, they are re-traumatized, facing their abuser, being ridiculed by lawyers and judges, and having their intimate and traumatic information discussed in front of an audience. Survivors experience victim blaming and disbelief by those they are turning to for help, and they feel as though they are being punished for trying to do the right thing. If we want more survivors to utilize the legal system and if we want abusers to be held accountable, our legal system will need restructured, making it easier and safer for survivors to report and testify and ensuring protection for survivors to come forward.