

# The Case for Safe Passage

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because the time is now and you are the solution

Almost 1 in every 4 Massachusetts women and more than 1 in every 7 Massachusetts men have been victims of intimate partner violence.

Each year, Safe Passage helps approximately 500 adults and children to recover from domestic violence. Look behind the numbers and you see resilient people living stories of transformation:

- Hope** *When living with violence every day, it is easy to lose faith that life will get better.*  
We offer someone who understands. 95% of domestic violence survivors in a Massachusetts study name this as their top need, and 94% say that a domestic violence program gave them more hope.
- Opportunity** *Abusers often keep their victims isolated from friends, family, and resources.*  
We help survivors find new housing and rebuild their financial lives, and we help them find the strength and self-esteem to reach for their dreams.
- Justice** *Survivors frequently cannot afford legal representation, even when their safety is at risk.*  
We provide legal assistance in probate and family issues.
- Safety** *With violence in the home, safety is always the first priority.*  
We help survivors create safety plans, and we provide emergency shelter for those who need it.
- Empowerment** *Domestic violence can make you feel helpless and resigned to the belief that you have no control. At Safe Passage, we listen, offer options and information, and respect survivors' choices. All of this helps them access inner strength and build self-confidence.*
- Health** *Physical injury and mental health issues are common results of abuse and trauma. Many survivors experience diminished overall health and chronic disease.*  
We provide specialized counseling for survivors with disabilities, as well as trauma-informed counseling for adults and children.

## SUPPORT SAFE PASSAGE

### **Why Now?**

This is an exciting time. Safe Passage has skilled leadership, a strong board, and highly motivated staff. We have a compelling and ambitious strategic plan, and we have the expertise to make it all happen. Thanks to solid community support, we are financially healthy and poised to expand our programs in innovative ways that will reduce domestic violence and support survivors. Your support right now will provide us the means to strengthen and grow our response to domestic violence.

### **Why You?**

Safe Passage offers a great way for you to meet your philanthropic goals and make a strong positive difference in the lives of individual people and in the community as a whole. You can make a general gift to be used where it is needed most at the time, or you can make a gift directly for one or more of our program initiatives.

To learn more about leadership giving at Safe Passage, contact Sarah Smith, Director of Development at 413-586-1125

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About 7 million American children live in homes with ongoing severe domestic violence, including beatings, burnings, use of weapons, and sexual abuse. Almost 90% of these children witness the violence, and over 75% are involved in incidents of violence, either as victims, or because they try to intervene or call for help.

At Safe Passage, we serve approximately 75 children each year in shelter and in our community based programs. Domestic violence has had a devastating effect on them. Kids exposed to violence often grow up with more physical and mental health problems, and are more likely to drop out of school and escape into substance abuse.

Up to 70% of children who witness domestic violence are also victims of it. Nearly half of the perpetrators who abuse their partners also abuse their own children or the children in their households.

But early intervention and support can drastically reduce the long term impact of exposure to violence.

...So YOU can do something to help.

Safe Passage: Focus on Children

## What We Do Now

- \* Counsel children
- \* Provide art- and play-based therapy
- \* Support groups for non-offending parents
- \* Train and support volunteers who provide on-site childcare in the shelter
- \* Due to our limited current capacity, serve almost 70% of children whose parents request services

## What Else We Can Do with Your Support

- \* Increase outreach and support for more children.
- \* Provide shelter-based therapy, along with learning and recreational opportunities for children while in shelter
- \* Increase our staff expertise on children's issues
- \* Build a homework space with computers, internet access, and resources for school-aged children
- \* Offer volunteer tutors to help children keep learning in troubling times, and when parents may be unable to tutor them
- \* Assist with educational access for teens so that they can dream and plan for their future
- \* Build a trauma-informed children's provider community as we develop collaborations with schools and agencies serving children
- \* Expand our mental health program to help more parents heal and become better caretakers for their children
- \* Purchase art supplies, toys, recreational equipment, scholarships to summer camps and children's activities, musical instruments, school supplies and backpacks, sports uniforms, and supplies. In other words, the things that help children heal, grow, learn, interact, dream, develop skills, build their leadership, and thrive.

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Imagine what can happen to victims of domestic violence who cannot afford legal assistance.

Many can't, whether because their income is low or because their abusers have complete control over their money. And without proper legal assistance, victims often don't know how to handle their cases in court, so their abusers win. This can mean abusers granted custody and visitation of children, restraining orders denied or enacted with dangerous loopholes, unfair divorce settlements, minimal child support, destroyed credit, foreclosure, eviction, poverty, and homelessness.

Consider Milagros: She is a 29-year-old mother of three and a student. The father of her youngest child beat her and verbally abused her older children, while the youngest watched. After they separated, the Department of Revenue sought child support from him. He retaliated by demanding shared legal custody and unsupervised visits with his daughter, although the little girl was afraid to be alone with him. Because Milagros was not properly notified of his request, she missed the hearing and her abuser was granted shared custody and unsupervised access to his daughter. That's when Milagros called Safe Passage. Our Legal Advocate helped her file the necessary motions and prepare for her court hearings. Safe Passage recruited one of our volunteer attorneys to represent her. Thanks to this assistance, Milagros regained sole legal custody and established supervised visitation to keep her daughter safe from abuse.

## Want to help keep domestic violence victims safe?

SAFE PASSAGE: LEGAL SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### What We Do Now

- \* Provide legal assistance to two-thirds of survivors who request it
- \* Employ a family attorney as Legal Advocate for 15 hours/week to offer:
  - \*initial case consultation
  - \*legal process advice
  - \*assistance with court documents
  - \*preparation for court appearances without representation
- \* Refer some income-eligible survivors to be represented in court by our subsidized panel attorneys
- \*Refer most clients to our panel attorneys on a private-pay basis

### What Else We Can Do with Your Support

- \* Build our capacity to provide legal assistance to all survivors who request it
- \*Expand Legal Advocate position to 25 hours/week
- \*Offer staff training on legal issue spotting and support
- \* Provide support and information to panel attorneys
- \* Support law student internship
- \* Develop training tools for survivors on legal issues, including divorce, child custody and support, immigration options, and housing
- \* Build our Legal Panel to fill gaps in cultural representation, expertise, and client need
- \* Expand program scope to include financial abuse and consumer law.

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