

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Domestic and sexual violence groups to meet with legislators

HAMPTON, VA – Transitions Family Violence Services and the Center for Sexual Assault Survivors will be meeting with Peninsula and state legislators on February 1 to discuss pending legislation, budget issues, and to advocate for domestic and sexual violence victims and survivors.

The meetings will be a part of *Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocacy Day* on February 1, 2006, organized by the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (VSDVAA). Each year VSDVAA attempted to improve Virginia's laws related to sexual and domestic violence and increase funding for services. Virginia organizations schedule meetings with their community legislators and state senators during the General Assembly to make their case for funding and to advocate against or for specific legislation.

The legislative priorities that Transitions and the Center will be addressing are:

- **Support** funding to create a statewide campus dating violence program;
- **Support** state funding of primary prevention programs for sexual and domestic violence;
- **Increase resources** for sexual violence programs by changing the title of the Domestic Violence Victim Fund to the Sexual and Domestic Violence Victim Fund;
- **Support** legislation to require all law enforcement agencies to have a written policy on how to respond to sexual assault;
- **Oppose** legislation that would create enhanced penalties or a separate misdemeanor for assault and battery of a family or household member in the presence of a minor;
- **Oppose** the current proposed amendment to the Virginia Constitution related to marriage, and, if necessary, in the General Election, because of its potentially dangerous consequences for all victims of sexual and domestic violence in unmarried relationships;
- **Support** legislation that would provide for confidentiality of written records and any identifying information related to victims who seek services at sexual or domestic violence agencies.

Transitions Family Violence Services is the largest domestic violence agency in Virginia, providing comprehensive family violence services in Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, and York County. Since 1977, Transitions has provided "*a pathway to safety . . . a source of hope*" to tens of thousands of women, children and men on the Virginia Peninsula. The agency offers comprehensive and intervention programs to help families with essential needs including emergency shelter, transitional housing, counseling, legal advocacy, childcare and children's services. To date,

Transitions has sheltered more than 15,000 victims of abuse for 150,000 nights and has provided outreach support to many thousands more.

The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors, located in Newport News, has been a part of this Hampton Roads Community since 1996. The mission of The Center is to provide support, treatment, and advocacy for persons whose lives have been disrupted by sexual violence; and to lead the community toward the reduction of sexual violence through education and awareness. It is a private, non-profit organization. All services are confidential and free of charge.

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