

# Legal Advocacy



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

DFS Division of  
Family Services

## What is it?

### **Support not legal representation**

Legal advocacy is the giving of information about criminal and civil legal procedures and providing support to survivors as they navigate the legal system. Advocates can give legal information but cannot give legal advice and cannot represent survivors in criminal or civil court proceedings.

## Why is it important?

### **Legal system is challenging for survivors**

The legal system can be overwhelming and trauma can make navigating it more difficult. An advocate can help a survivor understand possible resources, access them as needed, and connect to other community partners if needed.

## Is this required?

### **Maybe!**

Justice Systems Advocacy, community partner coordination, and justice system accompaniment are required parts of Professional Standards, which are optional at this time. (October 2021)

## How do we make it happen?

### **Learn the limits and lean on community partners as needed**

Learn about the legal options available to survivors, including how they can get emergency protective orders. Develop connections with Victim Witness personnel. Meet with the Commonwealth Attorney(s) that have the potential to serve your clients. Visit courtrooms to gain familiarity with the setting. Remember that