

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2020

1 October 2019 - 30 September 2020

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Looking Forward

2020 challenged all of us—personally and professionally—to be nimble. At BWJP this experience pushed us to new ways of delivering quality consultation, training and technical assistance, and policy leadership throughout the country.

The annual report captures these prominent operational shifts, alongside our sustained commitment to improve various systems' responses to gender-based violence. 2020 presented to us the reality that there is a copious amount of work left to be done in order to ensure meaningful access to all survivors of violence—regardless of race, language, gender identity, or the other myriad characteristics that too often lock victims out of relief. Our staff and board of directors remain committed to addressing these inequities.

In October, BWJP closed an important chapter in our own history, with the retirement of our founding Executive Director, Denise Gamache. We are grateful for her years of leadership and will build on her hard work in the years to come.

Thank you to our donors, governmental and nonprofit partners, and survivors across the country; you make our work possible. We look forward to your continued support and partnership in 2021 and beyond.

In Solidarity,

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Executive Director

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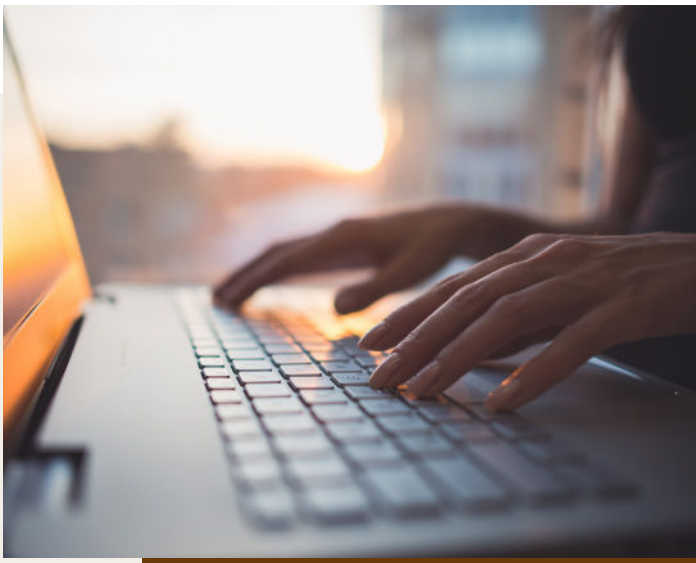
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Program Highlights

Diving into the Digital

Our team at the National Center for Protection Orders and Full Faith and Credit (NCPOFFC) demonstrated their ability to quickly pivot to address the pandemic's changes. With courts around the country closing or delaying proceedings, Millicent, Monica, and Sarah lost no time helping practitioners adapt to the new normal of protection order work. The three created webinars and other materials around remote court proceedings, and convened a meeting with other technical assistance providers to discuss work specific to the pandemic.

Sarah facilitated a webinar focused on providing advocacy during the pandemic, and quickly saw the immense demand for such critical information: Over 3,000 people signed up, eager to learn about how they could modify their work in the wake of stay-at-home orders. This level of demand caused BWJP to take a fresh look at our technological infrastructure and make updates to increase our capacity moving forwards. Meanwhile, Monica Player collaborated with domestic violence and animal welfare communities from around the country to produce a factsheet and, eventually, a webinar on COVID-19, intimate partner violence, and pets. This time, BWJP's network was ready for the wave of participants.



Throughout 2020, Millicent, Monica, and Sarah received well-deserved praise for their quick, thoughtful efforts to ensure victim-survivors' safety during the pandemic.

“What you and your colleagues do is incredible,” wrote one training participant, “and I am so glad we have people like you on our country's side.”

Talking Through Our Differences

BWJP published a report last April, as part of a three-year partnership with Palm Beach County, FL, on criminal justice responses to intimate partner violence. The report included an institutional analysis of certain law enforcement agencies and their responses to intimate partner violence across various jurisdictions. To obtain a balanced view of these agencies' work, BWJP compared their policies and procedures to internal incident reports and national best practices on gender-based violence response. Perhaps even more importantly, BWJP also reached out to local community members.

The diverse experiences of Palm Beach County's nearly 1.5 million residents could not be neglected. In order to capture these perspectives, BWJP organized four different listening sessions for survivors to speak candidly about their interactions with law enforcement. A consistent theme among survivors' accounts was the impact of language on their experiences and outcomes. For instance, a Brazilian Portuguese speaker spoke about struggling through conversations with one agency's sole Spanish-speaking officer. Most other victim-survivors did their best to communicate in English without language access support. One woman recalled that her story of being strangled was misunderstood by officers as an account of being "pushed," due to the absence of interpreters.

This institutional analysis uncovered a critical language-barrier issue, which provided the kindling needed for change. Local agencies who heard these stories were eager to improve; BWJP staff received dozens of comments from law enforcement professionals after publishing the report. Once the veil was lifted off of the language issue, one local police lieutenant was disillusioned to learn how impactful language access could be for survivors. An outpour of interest among law enforcement professionals laid the groundwork for an important collaboration with the Interpretation Technical Assistance Resource Center (ITARC). The partnership helped train officers to swiftly access interpretation support and has already helped improve outcomes for survivors of intimate partner violence in the area.



Recontextualizing and Recommitting

Once it became clear that the pandemic was here to stay, BWJP's Improving Criminal Justice Responses (ICJR) team started a monthly discussion series. The calls, known affectionately as "Casual Fridays," offered local and regional organizations receiving federal ICJR grants easy access to BWJP staff as technical assistance providers and networking opportunities with similar organizations around the country. Each month, between 10 and 15 attendees joined these meetings to process how their work has changed, build connections, and continue conversations alongside BWJP about critical, relevant topics.

A turning point in discussions of criminal justice came with the gruesome murder of Breonna Taylor at the hands of police. This murder, along with the countless other Black lives lost, highlighted the disproportionate failings of the civil and criminal justice systems when marginalized people—specifically, women of color—are involved. A multitude of career domestic violence and sexual assault activists reflected on the impacts that their work has had on survivors of color, and Casual Friday participants were no exception. Considering the widespread and long-term distrust of police among communities of color, should organizations like BWJP continue to prioritize systems work? And if not, could prioritizing alternative approaches to accountability undo the decades of progress that lawyers, activists, and survivors have gained in the justice system?

Such crucial questions led to the creation of a group, consisting mostly of women of color, who wanted to bring the conversation back to basics by focusing on the people at the center of all these debates: survivors.

The group arrived at the consensus that, no matter where battles are fought, they are fought on behalf of victim-survivors. Bringing this fundamental truth everywhere that we work, said BWJP's own Sujata Warrier, will help us overcome the binary lines of thinking that many have fallen into, and which pit police and prisons against mediation and healing.

"It's not 'this or that,' but both 'this and that,'" explained Sujata.

The cohort took a brief hiatus from meeting over the holiday season, but aims to reconvene and move forward in early 2021.

New Paths to Community Safety

In June of 2019, Dave Keck and Alicia Nichols at BWJP's National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms (NRCDVF) were called in to New Mexico to train law enforcement officers. The state's new law—which mirrored federal prohibitions on firearm possession by domestic abusers—was about to take effect starting July 1st. Over the next few weeks, Alicia and Dave worked across the state to make sure that officers everywhere were trained on evidence-based practices to enforce the new law. The law intended to ensure that the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) would be used consistently and effectively throughout the state, making information about individuals subject to firearms prohibitions available to all officers.

This example from New Mexico, which focused on implementing federal firearm prohibitions, highlights a focal point of the NRCDVF's work since its founding.

However, over the past year, staff have come to realize that this work is only one piece of a much larger puzzle. With Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and other high-profile murders in 2020, the shortcomings of relying too heavily on law enforcement intervention have come into relief. The NRCDVF has made a point of starting conversations around different methods of promoting community safety. As Director Dave Keck put it, "With COVID-19, the increase in gun sales and domestic violence have showed us that the status quo just isn't enough anymore."

Moving into 2021, the NRCDVF is hard at work exploring faith-, education- and public health-based methods of gun violence reduction, alongside their work with law enforcement around the country.



Making Progress around Due Process



Early in 2020, BWJP’s Custody project submitted an amicus curiae brief to the United States Supreme Court. The brief urged them to review a lower court’s decision in *Lamprell v. Stuckey*, a case involving a custody dispute between two parents in New Mexico. A district court had given full custody of the couple’s child to the father, who was under investigation for minor sexual abuse at the time.

The district court had based its decision on a third-party investigator’s report, but both the mother and father were prevented from reviewing or questioning the information in said report. This, BWJP argued, was a violation of the mother’s due process rights—a violation routinely committed across the country in similar family courts. The Supreme Court had a duty to take up this case to ensure a just outcome, as well as to set precedent on minimum due process guarantees that courts are required to meet in future custody cases.

The brief received praise from legal professionals across the country, who called it, “a work of art,” and “the strongest case that could have been made for granting [writ of certiorari].” BWJP will continue its track record of supporting and conducting important amicus work in the future, particularly in the field of indigenous sovereignty. For updates on our amicus work, visit [BWJP.org](https://www.bwjp.org)’s news section.

Yes We CAAN!

Building partnerships among staff from different organizations is critical to ending gender-based violence. One of our most compelling collaborations is CAAN, a highly-respected meeting among practitioners throughout the US. Two attendees wrote to us late last year to offer their praise and appreciation:

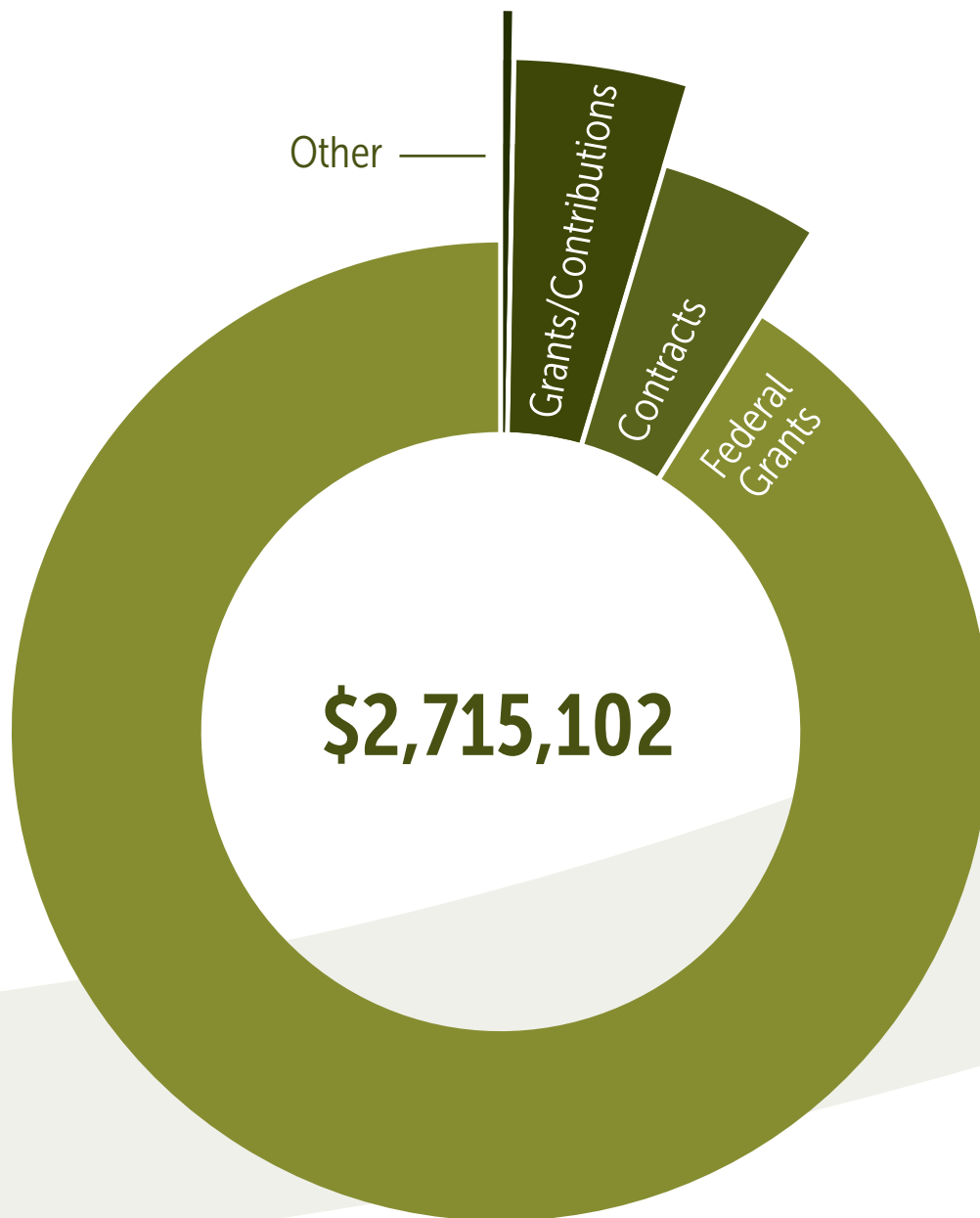
“The annual Coalition Advocates and Attorney Network (CAAN) meeting that BWJP hosts is always a must-attend event on our calendars. It provides an opportunity for us to hear about the innovative legislation that other states are moving forward, as well as the challenges and set-backs. We always walk away with new ideas to bring home and explore implementing in California. The relationship building is another core component, giving us time to get to know our colleagues from other states, who we rarely spend time with in person. When the pandemic struck, the possibility of losing those opportunities to connect and come together was a huge disappointment. The BWJP new virtual structure with Zoom calls and guest speakers have sparked ideas for what we can do at the state level, and it’s been so nice to ‘see’ everyone on Zoom, as well as connect and engage in conversations in break out rooms. We are deeply appreciative to BWJP for finding ways to keep us connected even while we’re apart.”

-Krista Niemczyk and Christine Smith, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence

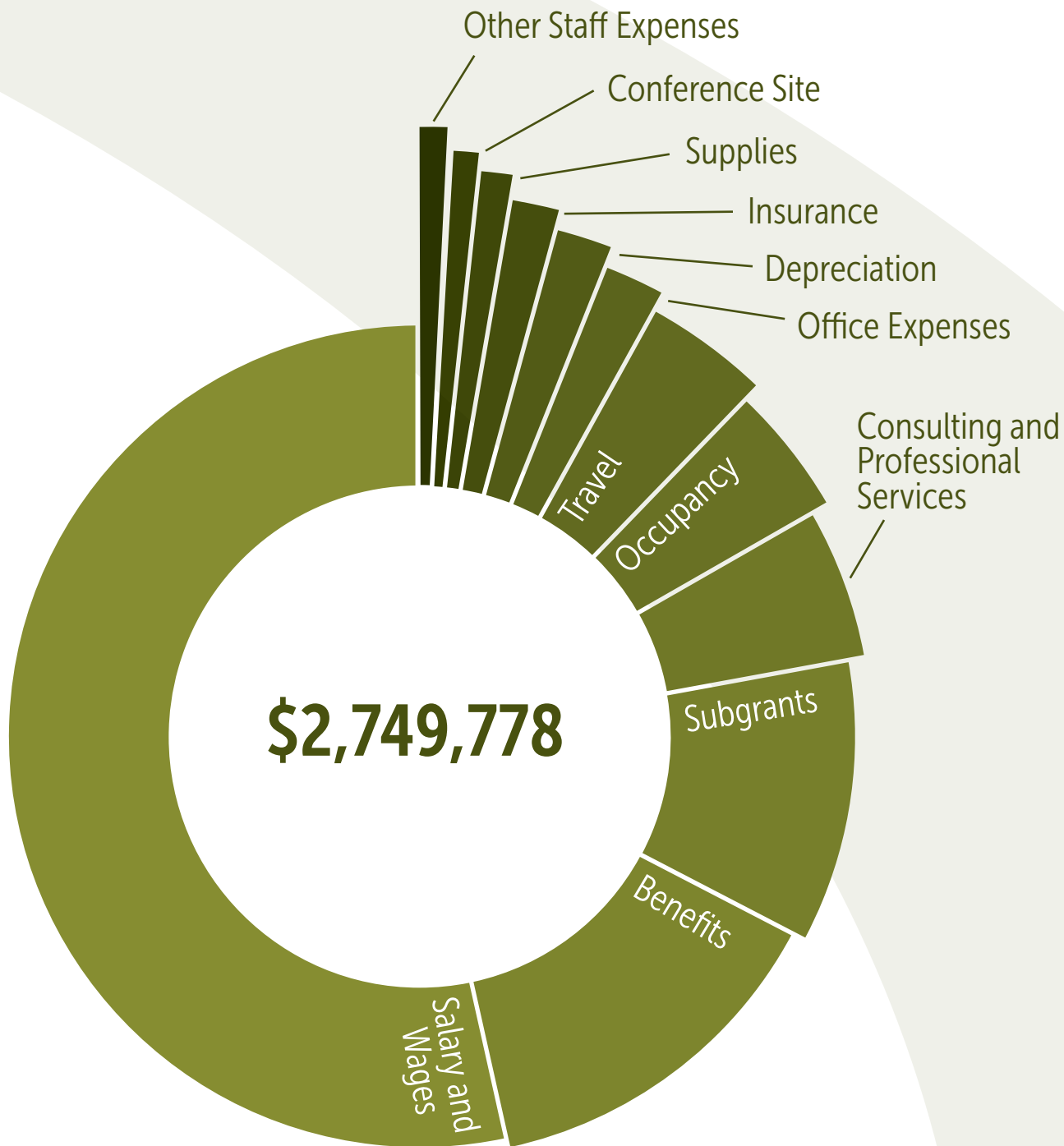
If you'd like to learn more about CAAN, email technicalassistance@bwjp.org or call **800-901-0111 x1**. We welcome your participation in this dynamic, proactive group.



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Expenses



BWJP's IRS Form 990 can be found on BWJP.org.

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We are grateful to these supporters, who share our vision of a legal system that effectively responds to victim-survivors and their families.

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