**Statement on the Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy**

The Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence strongly supports the VSHSL. We were very involved in advocating for it to be put on the ballot, and are currently involved in the planning for how the funds would be spent, should it pass. While we are not happy that the only tax options currently available to the county are regressive, the property tax is less regressive than the sales tax, and because the VSHSL is an expansion of an existing renewal, the increase to low and middle income folks would be very modest ($28 a YEAR for the average homeowner!). The levy would fund extremely critical housing stability and other human services for people in our community who are being most heavily impacted by the escalating cost of living in our region, including people of color, refugees and immigrants, women, lgbtq people, seniors, and people with disabilities. Services specifically for survivors of domestic and sexual violence **could** be funded under the “vulnerable populations” portion of the levy, many survivors also could benefit from many other services funded through the levy. **We strongly urge you to Vote YES on King County Proposition 1 – the Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy.**

**Domestic Violence Case Example**

Amy came to the US to be with her husband Kyle, an American she met while travelling.  Shortly after they moved into their new home he began verbally, emotionally, and sexually abusing her, which soon escalated to pushing, shoving and pinching any time she said something he didn’t like or if he felt that she was in his way.

Amy withstood this abuse for several years before it escalated to serious physical violence, including Kyle beating and choking her.  Despite the escalating violence, she stayed with Kyle for several more years hoping that marriage counseling, anger management classes, a new job or something else would change his behavior, but nothing ever did and Amy finally decided she had had enough.

With the support of a friend back home she found the courage to leave, but she had no friends or relatives in the States, no money of her own, and no place to go, so she called LifeWire.

A LifeWire advocate helped Amy find an apartment, obtain funding to pay for first and last months’ rent and get her own bank accounts opened so that she could pay the rent moving forward.  The Advocate also helped her connect to support groups, counseling, and legal services to pursue a divorce.  Amy now works full time and volunteers for two community organizations.  She is doing very well.

Unfortunately, LifeWire must turn away 26 households for every one that we are able help into shelter or housing.  We have a three month waiting list for mental health services and a 20-person waiting list at any given time for legal assistance.  With the expansion of the levy, more survivors like Amy would be able to access services to help them find safety and healing.

**Sexual Assault Case Example**

Amber is a 16-year old honor student, athletic, involved in the Student Body Association.   She was sexually abused by two male friends she invited to her house during the holidays.  Right after disclosing about the rape the next morning, Amber’s mom, Irene, took her to the hospital for a rape exam.  She was then provided with the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center’s 24 -hour resource line number.  Irene called and spoke with an advocate, who calmed her anxiety and provided her with guidance and support.

The resource line advocate connected Irene to KCSARC’s Intake Line, and the Client Care Specialist connected with her the following day.  Irene was again in distress, as she was re-living her own sexual assault history, and felt a lot of guilt for allowing her daughter to have friends over for the holiday and for not being aware of what was going on in her house.  The Client Care Specialist provided Irene with an immense amount of support, validated and acknowledged her emotions, and provided her with information on how to best support her daughter.

The Client Care Specialist then connected Irene and Amber with a Legal Advocate, who over the following weeks helped them through the Joint Interview process, the Sexual assault protection order process, and the prosecution process.

Prior to being raped by her friends, Amber was described to be very outgoing, bubbly, and free spirited; however, in the aftermath, she became withdrawn and depressed. The Legal Advocate connected Amber to Therapy services at KCSARC right away. Amber has been in therapy for the past three months.  Since then, Amber has been able to get back in to playing club soccer, is back sleeping in her room now, and has the strength and courage to be able to share her story to her class for a class project.  Irene says that she now has the tools to help her daughter through this trauma.

Unfortunately, KCSARC legal advocacy and therapy services are over-taxed, so not all survivors of sexual violence can access the support they need when and where they need it, as Irene and Amber were able to. This problem could be alleviated with support from the expanded Veterans, Seniors, and Human Service Levy.