



# Academy Forum

*Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy*

The Association Newsletter

Issue #50- Sept 2019

### Just a Thought

*Staying relevant in one's field is the key to success. One of the most important ways to accomplish this is through continuing education and certification. Learn how VSPN can help you earn your certification.*  
**Page 1**

### Web Links

*You never know what resources await you on the world-wide web ...come see what our latest surfing expedition uncovered.*  
**Page 2**

### Save the Date!

*Find out what trainings and events are just around the corner. It looks like there are lots of ways to keep you busy during the next few months!*  
**Page 2**

### Certification News

*Want to learn how to become a certified victim service professional in the state of Maryland? This section explains each level of certification, and what are the specific requirements for each.*  
**Page 3**

### News From the Field

*It's important to stay abreast of what legislation is working its way through Annapolis. This section highlights what recently passed, or is currently under consideration.*  
**Page 4**

### Best Practices

*Building a culture of professionalism within the field of victim services has been a key mission of RVAAM. Naomi Taffet explains the value and importance of continuing this movement.*  
**Page 5**

## Just a thought...

### It's More Than Just Letters

#### *The Importance of Professional Certification*

When you pick a doctor or a lawyer to work with you, you almost certainly base part of your decision on the credentials they have, such as the schools they attended and the cases they've worked on. After all, you want to make sure that you choose someone who knows what they are talking about and who has the experience in the appropriate domain.

The same applies to victim services - the right certification not only helps you shore up your understanding and training in the field, but it also provides quantifiable evidence of competence in this challenging and competitive field.

The end goal of certification demonstrates to victim services agencies and other organizations that you have both the

knowledge and experience necessary to be successful in the role. Your resume could show that you have decades of experience in working with victims, but if you're missing that key certification, you might get overlooked. Many hiring managers in these areas use certifications to distinguish the most qualified candidates from the rest of the applicant pool. Competition for the top victim services careers is stiff, and having relevant certifications

gives you an advantage over other candidates. In fact, some employers are now requiring that you be certified in order to even work for their organization.

Once you've been hired, it should quickly become clear why so many organizations are looking for victim services team members with certifications. From homicides and assaults, to armed robberies and sexual assaults, your certifications pave the way for you to establish yourself as an expert in the field, and make you a

critical asset for your team. Certifications enable you to learn new skills and technologies that can help you perform your job better, and help educate the rest of your team. And if you have limited experience in a particular area of victim services that you wish to pursue, obtaining a certification is a great way to get your foot in the door, as well as to find professional connections and networking opportunities.

Of course, there's the matter of your financial compensation as well. Certification adds value. Managers and supervisors see that you take your job seriously, and that you prioritize

continuing professional development. Therefore, you are in a better position to negotiate a higher starting salary, or advocate for a specific promotion.

While in a perfect world, your knowledge would be enough to get you a job, however, the reality is that agencies and programs are looking for tangible proof of

**(Continued on page 4)**



**EDITOR'S CORNER**

*Hello Alum!*

*What a year we have had so far! It's hard to believe that we are already starting to see fall colors pop up. The start of summer seems like it was just yesterday. Maybe this is because we have had so much jam-packed into 2019 already! As many of you know, this was the first year we were able to host a winter class at the Academy. And, what a class it was!! What a wonderful group of individuals. And then a few months later, we hosted another phenomenal group at our June Academy! How fortunate we are. In less than six months, we have added over 70 new alums to our family!!*

*Now it's time for all our newest alums to take the next step to get certified! For those of you who are interested, all you need to do is email me and let me know how many years you've been working with victims of crime so I can determine which level of certification you are eligible for. I will guide you the rest of the way, and together we'll get you over the finish line!*

*For those of you who are already certified, don't forget to complete your required Ethics training (3 hours) before year's end to renew your certification.*

*Finally, keep on the lookout for the application for our 2nd winter Academy in February! It will soon be posted on the RVAAM website, so when you see it, please share the information with your colleagues so we can once again enjoy a vibrant winter class.*

*Until next time, enjoy your autumn!*

**Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII**

[bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org)

*An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest. ~ Ben Franklin*

**WEB LINKS**

*Although we have a virtual library at our fingertips every time we turn on the computer, we often lose sight of the forest through the trees just trying to navigate the world-wide web. Here are a few sites that relate to this issue's "Just a Thought" ... happy surfing!*



**Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland**

The Academy offers a rare opportunity to live, work, study, and interact with victim service providers from all areas of advocacy, across the state of Maryland. While it is assumed that participants will have had previous training in their area of specialization, the Academy provides a fundamental overview of the entire field of advocacy, including: victimology, victim rights, and victim assistance for residents in Maryland. Sessions are led by recognized leaders and practitioners in the field of victimology, criminal justice and victim rights, and the curriculum focuses on skill building and best practices. For more information about the Academy, go to: <http://rvaam.org>

**Victim Services Professional Network**

The alumni organization affiliated with the Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland, VSPN advocates for the professionalization of victim services. In addition to supporting and collaborating with RVAAM, VSPN strives to foster opportunities for its

members to network with their fellow victim service professionals from various specializations across the state of Maryland through both professional and social events hosted throughout the year. Be sure to check out their Facebook page at VSPN Roper, or subscribe to their Twitter account @VSPN411

**SAVE THE DATE!**



**2020 RVAAM Academies**

Once again, RVAAM will be offering **TWO Academies** this year - a winter session and a summer session! Space is limited, so apply soon!

**February 17th - 21st, 2020**

**AND**

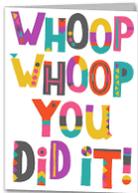
**June 1st - 5th, 2020**



Both Academies will be hosted at the beautiful and peaceful Bon Secours Retreat Center in Marriottsville, MD. To register, go to [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us) and download an application.

**VSTEP TRAININGS**

The agenda for the next round of VSTEP Trainings is being finalized, so keep watch on your email and on the RVAAM website for the topics, dates, and locations!



## ALUMNI UPDATES

*It seems like only yesterday when we were all together at the Academy. But in a blink of an eye another year has passed us by. Here's just a snapshot of some of the special events and milestones our alums have experienced since we last met...*

- **Kathy Bowen (Class of 2009)** - Our deepest sympathies are extended to Kathy and her family for the loss of her mother. We hope the memories you shared as a family will continue to bring you comfort throughout this difficult time.
- **Debbie Bradley, C.A., VAS-III (Class of 2005) and Kara Danger (Class of 2010)** - Debbie and Kara have been selected by the National Organization of Victim Assistance for the Tadini Bacigalupi Jr. Outstanding Award! What an accomplishment and an honor!! Way to go you two - we couldn't be prouder!
- **Siobhan Copeland, VAS-II (Class of 2018)** - Siobhan recently gave birth to her second son this spring - congratulations! We hope you, your littlest one, and the rest of your family are doing well. We also want to congratulate Siobhan for receiving a grant from the Wayfinder Foundation to do a documentary on Relisha Rudd, and how multiple systems fail people of color, especially children, who are poor.
- **Stacia Dashiell, VAS-III (Class of 2014)** - Stacia has been named one of Maryland's Top 100 Women for 2019 according to the Daily Record! WOW! This award is to recognize high-achieving Maryland women who are making an impact through their leadership, community service, and mentoring. Congratulations Sta-

cia, we are so incredibly proud of you!!

- **Ja'ara McCoy (Class of 2018)** - Ja'ara was recently promoted to the Anti-Trafficking and Exploitation Coordinator at the Baltimore Child Abuse Center! And she was even profiled by the Baltimore Sun for her new position. Way to go Ja'ara! We so love it when our Alum get the positions they deserve.
- **Kenya Pope, VAS-I (Class of 2018)** - Kenya recently received her Ministerial License, as well as her National Credentials and her Maryland Certification in Victim Services. Wow!! This is so impressive! We are so proud of you for striving to be the absolute best you can be to better serve your clients. Congratulations, and job well done!

## CERTIFICATION NEWS

*Why aren't you certified in victim services yet? When you pick a doctor or a lawyer to work with you, you almost always certainly base your decision on their credentials, such as the school they've attended and the cases they have worked on. After all, you want to make sure that you choose someone who knows what they are talking about and who has the most experience in the appropriate domain. The same applies to victim services - the right certification not only helps you to bolster your knowledge and skills that you can use when working with victims, but also provides quantifiable evidence of your competence in this challenging and competitive field. So, what are you waiting for? Go to [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us) to learn more about the certification process and download a copy of the application today!*

*There are three levels of certification in Maryland, each require a specific set of qualifications and are described in detail below:*

- \* **Level I (VAS-I)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of two years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 40 hours of training (RVAAM, NVAA, or other SVAA); d) interview; e) \$50 application processing fee
- \* **Level II (VAS-II)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of five years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 80 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 40 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) written essay on what changes are needed in victim services; e) \$75 application processing fee.
- \* **Level III (VAS-III)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum eleven years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 120 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 80 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) oral presentation on approved topic in Victim Assistance; e) \$100 application processing fee.



*There is also a similarly tiered renewal process in place for those advocates who want to remain current with their certification:*

\* **Level I** - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within the past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; and b) complete renewal application packet and pay the \$25 renewal fee.

\* **Level II** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level I to Level II - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) written essay on what changes are needed in victim services; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$50 fee.

\* **Level III** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level II to Level III - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) oral presentation on approved topic in victim assistance; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$75 fee.

All application materials are available online at [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us) (click on the Certification tab at the top of the page). Keep an eye out for upcoming classes on ethics. For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org) or by phone at (410) 638-4905.

**Check out ALL of certified Victim Assistance Specialists for the State of Maryland ... isn't it time you joined this group?**

**Level I Victim Assistance Specialist**

- |                         |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Rose Albert             | Claudia Ahwireng   |
| Elizabeth Baran         | Laurelle Blair     |
| Miriam Blum             | Heather Bosley     |
| Valarie Brice           | Marianne Camino    |
| Neijma Celestine-Donnor |                    |
| Jole Gibson-Ruff        | Kara-Sue Harriott  |
| Tonya Helbig            | Margaret Henderson |
| Wendy Hernandez         | Andrea Hollern     |
| Dr. Iris Jackson        | Barbara Korenblit  |

- |                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Therese Lewis               | Dana Mason        |
| Kathy McKnight              | Kitty Nelson      |
| Melissa Olschewske          | Timmeka Perkins   |
| Kenya Pope                  | Amanda Richardson |
| Elizabeth Ringler-Jayanthan |                   |
| Misty SanJulian             | Jessica Savage    |
| Lakendra Schwendig          | John Serbin       |
| Christina Simmons           | Delores Smith     |
| Tara Strickland-Smith       | Ashley Stuck      |
| Patricia Thomas             | Wanda Wallace     |
| Jessica Watson              | Angela Wharton    |
| Mamie Wilson                |                   |

**Level II Victim Assistance Specialist**

- |                        |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Aida Alajbegovic       | Carmen Alvarez-Diaz |
| Kadovia Baublitz-Smith | Suzan Boisclair     |
| Tiffanie Cannon        | Paulette Carroll    |
| Angelica Cook          | Siobhan Copeland    |
| Falema Graham          | Earth Harris        |
| Camden Heath           | Sharon Hicklin      |
| Carmen Holloway        | Carolyn Hutchings   |
| Elaine Jenkins         | Shirley Jensen      |
| Jennifer Manzione      | Monique Mitchell    |
| Merrick Moses          | Miesha Rice         |
| Georgie Soloman        | Dana Spence         |
| Evelyn Vargas          | Dina Ward           |

**Level III Victim Assistance Specialist**

- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Debbie Bradley              | Heather Courtney        |
| Stacia Dashiell             | Jessica Dickerson       |
| Ariel Ervin                 | Barbara Elliott-Harvard |
| Deidre Gardner              | Keith Gethers           |
| Karen Greene                | Robin Haskins           |
| Nora Henderson Bowen        |                         |
| Theresa Anne Hiegel-Sherman |                         |
| Kim Holmes                  | Deborah Howard          |
| Tya Johnson                 | Audra Johnson           |
| Sherry Jones                | Michelle Lee            |
| Anne Litecky Gwendolyn Long |                         |
| Shelly McMath               | Mona Metz               |
| Ruby Nelson                 | Cheryl Olorogun-Peguese |
| Teresa Peek                 | Denielle Randall        |
| Gregory Riddick, Sr.        | Brynez Roane            |
| Jessica Roman               | Valda Rotolo            |
| Antionietta Saunders        | Linda Shaw              |
| Delaine Smith-Clark         | Naomi Taffet            |
| Victoria Thomas             | Melissa Ward-Quinn      |
| Arneisha Woods              | Singleton Wyche         |

**Just a Thought (Cont.)**

expertise. Certifications provide an objective measure of your capabilities and competencies. So, why not position yourself in the best manner when starting your career in victim services, or when looking to advance your career? Make it a priority this year to get

at least one certification. And, if you have not done so already, a good place to start is to get certified through Victim Services Professional Network (VSPN). To date, 86 victim service professionals in Maryland have been certified by VSPN (a list of names of these individuals is provided above). The certification process is not complicated, and I would be more than happy to walk you through it. You owe it to yourself, and to the people you serve to have the best set of tools and resources available in your toolbox. So, send me an email at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org) to get started today!

*Essay contributed by Debbie Bradley, C.A., VAS-III (Class of 2005).*



**NEWS FROM THE FIELD**

*It's important we all keep abreast of changes to laws and/or policies that have a direct affect on victims of crime. If you hear of new law or policy being proposed at the local, state, or federal level, be sure to share it with us!*

**HB0317/SB0823 - Maryland Commission on Civil Rights -**

**Civil Penalties-** Increasing certain civil penalties the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights is authorized to seek if it finds that a respondent has engaged in a discriminatory act regarding public accommodations and certain actions by persons licensed and regulated by a unit in the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation;

providing that certain maximum penalty amounts do not apply if a certain discriminatory act is determined to be malicious; requiring any civil penalties collected under the Act to be paid to the complainant, not the general fund; etc. The bill is expected to be effective in October 2019.

**SB0144 - Victims and Witnesses - U Nonimmigrant Status - Certification of Victim Helpfulness-** Authorizing, for purposes of filing a petition for U Nonimmigrant status, a victim of qualifying criminal activity or the victim’s parent, guardian, or next friend to request a certifying official to certify victim helpfulness on a Form I-918, Supplement B certification under certain circumstances; providing the certifying entity must certify or decline certification of the form within 90 days of receiving a certain request; providing that a certifying entity or official is immune from certain criminal or civil liability; etc. The bill is expected to be effective in October 2019.

## Best Practices

### *RVAAM: Creating a Culture of Professionalism*

For the past 15 1/2 years, the Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland (RVAAM) has been a role model for almost every other state in the country on providing comprehensive, multidisciplinary information that is both up-to-date and grounded in best-practices to those who are working with victims of crime in the public and private sectors. As many of you may can attest, this 40 hour training is unlike any other. Approximately 40 strangers walk into a room together at the start of the week, and by the end of that week, 40 friends and colleagues depart. To date, the Academy has graduated over 600 alums. But the training and opportunity for professional development has not stopped

for these individuals. Each and every one of the graduates of the Academy is invited to join the Victim Services Professional Network (VSPN), the official alumni organization of RVAAM, to help them stay connected with their peers from their own graduating class, as well to continue to build their professional network by connecting with



alums from prior Academies. VSPN and RVAAM also work together to sponsor additional trainings throughout the state to further enhance the professional development of its members. One of the current initiatives is the VSTEP Regional Crime Victim Trainings, which brings leading experts to lead half-day and full-day trainings on topics most relevant for a particular region to the victim service professionals in their own communities. The topics covered thus far have included trauma responses, mental health and addiction, assisting families of crime victims, and human trafficking. These trainings have been free and open to the community, however, RVAAM alum are given first preference. This is yet another way that RVAAM has distinguished itself among the other state academies - it has found a way to make continuing education for victim service providers in our state more accessible by taking their training model “on the road.” The VSTEP program has been very successful, training over 2,000 professionals across the state of Maryland, and another round of VSTEP trainings are currently being planned for the upcoming winter and spring months.

Another thing that differentiates

RVAAM from other state academies is that it created and oversees the Maryland Victim Assistance Certification Program (MVSCP). This program provides victim service professionals the opportunity to be certified on three levels, depending on the number of years they have been working in the field. Each level requires its own set of qualifications, and victim service professionals can work their way up to the highest level (VAS-III) through continued professional development and training. The partnership between RVAAM and MVSCP enables graduates of the Academy to satisfy the required 40 hours of training for Level I of Certification (VAS-I).

The importance of RVAAM and MVSCP to the field of victim services can not be overstated. More agencies and programs across the state are beginning to require new hires to attend the Academy within their first year of employment (if they had not done so already). This is because these agencies and programs recognize the importance of having individuals who have been trained on a set of professional standards in victim services, similar to what we saw when social workers first started to pursue professional credentialing. RVAAM has been at the forefront of this movement, and it is through the collective efforts of the Academy faculty and staff that Maryland can continue to serve as the leader for certification among its peers.

On behalf of the many RVAAM alums, a huge thanks to Dr. Debra Stanley, Dr. Heather Pfeifer, Dave Thomas, Deb Bradley, Anne Litecky, Elaine Witman, and Linda Fair for your many years of devotion to building the Academy, and to continuing to improve the field of victim services through continuing education and certification.

*Essay contributed by Naomi Taffet, LCSW-C, VAS-III (Class of 2016), Director of Service Coordination, CHANA*



## Welcome Newest Alums of RVAAM!!

In 2019, the RVAAM family welcomed not just one, but TWO graduating classes to its alumni ranks! The first class to graduate in 2019 completed their Academy in February during the week of Valentines (perhaps that is why they were all so sweet). Please welcome the following graduates to VSPN:

Keesha Anderson	Beth Audet
Evangula Brown	Tiffanie Cannon
Nina Costa	Andrea Curley
Lakisha Davis-Small	Chayla Fleming
Colleen Galo	Heather Hale
Razibul Hasan	Sharon Hicklin
Michelle Jackson	Niria Jean-Louis
Kenneth Jennings	Barbara Korenblit
Amanda Kretchen-Farnett	
Johnny Martin, Jr.	Kathy McKnight
Tierra Morales	Alice Oaks
Teresa Peek	Crystal Perry
Gregory Riddick, Sr.	Ana Rivera-Ortiz
Dominique Rogers	Cornelius Scott
Tiesha Scrivner	Vickie Sneed
Evelyn Diaz-Sorto	Brentrell Spencer
Heather Stauder	Joyce Swinson
Alex Vettel	Jessica Watson

Not even four months later, the second class to graduate in 2019 completed their Academy in June. It was one of the largest graduating classes, and they were an exceptional bunch. Please welcome the following graduates to VSPN:

Joyce Alexander	Jordan Alpert
Daneil Ansumana	Deeana Antoon
Michael Arscott	Josh Baggett
Leona Banks-Ward	Cheryl Beebe
Lauren Benjamin	Erica Bobo
Darlene Cain	Gina Caleron
Tina Camara	Gardnel Carter
Giovanni Castellucci	Jessica Chase
Jana Cook	Nancy Eley
Anja Fernandez-Placencia	
Patricia Hall	Megan Hedges
Jerome Jackson	Eric Johnson, Jr.
Bridgett Jones-Smith	Helena Klassen
Megan Landis	Nicole Lee
Wendy Lee	Pamela Lipscomb
Elgin Maith	Julia Mason
Aaron McCracken	Joely Moore
Tracey Pauls	Kyle Rollins
Jhadira Sanchez-Felizzola	Salome Santos
Nancy Shifter	Charanjit Singh
Raquella Smith	Tiffany Smith
Sharyn Terrasa	Doreen Toran
Madeline Welsh	Gretta Willis

## Thoughts, Ideas, Suggestions?

Are you looking for more information about a particular issue in the field of victim services? The Editorial Board is always looking for new topics to profile in the newsletter that can assist our Alums both personally and professionally. Please send any suggestions you might have for a future topic to Debbie Bradley at [bradleyd@harford-sheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harford-sheriff.org). And remember, we are also happy to share any information you have about job openings and professional trainings you might think your fellow Alums would benefit from!

## Alumni Directory

The 2019 Alumni Directory, which includes the addition of the most recent Academy class members is now available for distribution. However, we still would like your help to keep the Alumni Directory up to date! If any of your personal and/or professional information changes, please contact Debbie Bradley via email at [bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org) or by phone at (410) 638-4905.

## Editorial Board

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Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in January 2020

