

2026 Victim Rights Award Recipients

Dawn Sauma, Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (ATASK)

Gerard D. Downing Leadership Award

Recognizes a public or private agency leader who has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advancing the rights of crime victims. This individual is recognized by his or her colleagues for their efforts in advancing victim rights.

Dawn Sauma, MSW, LICSW, is Co-Executive and Clinical Director of the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (ATASK), where she has led direct services, grant development, and cross-sector collaborations since 2010. With over 30 years in social services across Hawaii and Massachusetts, she has supported Asian and Pacific Islander communities as a clinician, educator, and nonprofit leader. Drawing from both lived and professional experience, Dawn's work reflects a deep commitment to advancing equity, healing, and justice. She also serves in leadership roles on coalitions and community initiatives, including as Board President of Jane Doe Inc., Community Co-Chair of ADAPT (Tufts CTSI), and on the steering committees of APIs-CAN and the MIRA Advisory Committee, advancing policy and advocacy for immigrant and AA&PI Communities.

Senator Paul Feeney, Massachusetts State Senator, Bristol & Norfolk District

Legislator of the Year Award

Recognizes a legislator who has made outstanding contributions to the victim rights movement through promoting legislation and policy that furthers rights and services to victims and survivors.

Paul Feeney is a Democratic State Senator serving his fifth term in the Massachusetts Senate representing the Bristol & Norfolk district. Senator Feeney is the Assistant-Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Financial Services. Since his election to the Senate, Paul has been a voice for the under-served, whether it be workers negotiating for a fair contract, middle class residents struggling to make ends meet, or survivors of violence in need of an advocate. Senator Feeney works closely with organizations in his District such as New Hope Inc., to support victims of domestic violence and the Foxborough Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Committee to advance legislation he has filed to strengthen mandated reporter provisions across the Commonwealth. Paul is also the lead sponsor of legislation to address the alarming prevalence of illicit drink spiking incidents in the Commonwealth to ensure victims have access to necessary care and recourse.

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Prior to his service in the Senate, Paul was a blue-collar telecommunications technician by trade for over 20 years. He served as a member and Chairperson of the Select Board in his community of Foxborough, as well as the legislative director, spokesperson and chief steward of his local union in Boston, MA. Paul resides in Foxborough with his wife Laura, a licensed family childcare provider and small business owner. He is an avid Boston sports fan, sports card and memorabilia collector, and unrelenting promoter of the idea that Tom Brady is in fact, the Greatest of All Time.

Laura W. Gal, Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS)

Access to Justice Award

Recognizes a survivor, service provider, agency or organization (criminal legal and/or community-based) whose leadership and outreach efforts have made victim rights and services more accessible or readily available to underserved populations.

Laura W. Gal is Managing Attorney for Family Law at Greater Boston Legal Services, where she oversees a team of 20 advocates engaged in trial and appellate court litigation, community outreach, and systemic advocacy on behalf of low-income survivors of domestic violence and other disadvantaged parents raising families in the Commonwealth. Previously, while a staff attorney at Community Legal Aid, Laura was lead counsel on *L.B. v. Chief Justice of the Probate and Family Court*, 474 Mass. 231 (2016), which expanded the rights of indigent parents to court-appointed counsel in guardianship of minor cases. Laura began her legal career at the nation's first medical-legal partnership, Family Advocacy Project of Boston City Hospital (now "MLP Boston") where she established a legal aid project for grandparents raising their grandchildren. Among her other professional and volunteer activities, Laura is a member of the Women's Bar Association's Amicus Committee, the Boston Bar Association's Delivery of Legal Services Committee, and the Access to Justice Commission's Family Law Committee. She co-chaired the Access to Justice Commission (2021-2022), served as a member of the Judicial Nominating Commission (2023-2025), was a board member for the Women's Bar Association (2017-2019), and has been a guest lecturer at Boston College School of Law (2016 - 2018) and Suffolk University Law School (2026). Laura was a 2025 recipient of the Women's Bar Association's Lelia J. Robinson award, a 2024 Top Women of the Law recipient, and a 2011 Community Legal Aid Equal Justice awardee. Laura received her B.A. from Dartmouth College in 1991 and her J.D., with honors, from The George Washington University Law School in 1995.

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Denise Cosby, The Just-In-Time Initiative

Special Recognition Award

Recognizes a survivor of crime who has transformed their experience of victimization into positive change, healing, and leadership through promoting rights and services for victims and survivors.

Denise Cosby was born in Richmond, Virginia. She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from Virginia Union University in 1978 and pursued graduate studies in Criminal Justice at Virginia Commonwealth University. In 1988, Denise relocated to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she has resided ever since. She built a distinguished 20-year career as a legal assistant in major Boston law firms, including the internationally renowned Ropes & Gray. Denise is a Realtor and the Founder of The Just in Time Initiative. Denise is the proud mother of Shenita Cosby and the late Justin Cosby. In 2009, her youngest child, Justin Cosby, age 21, was murdered on the grounds of Harvard University. That devastating loss transformed Denise's life and purpose. In the wake of intense media speculation surrounding her son's murder, Denise made the courageous decision to tell the story from a mother's perspective. After enduring two and a half years of court proceedings to bring three defendants to justice, she authored a deeply personal memoir, "Murder at Harvard's Kirkland House-A Mother's Worst Nightmare," that offers an unfiltered account of grief, resilience, faith, and the pursuit of justice. Since Justin's death, Denise has become a dedicated advocate for families impacted by homicide and traumatic loss. She speaks to young adults about accountability, choices, and consequences, urging them to consider how a single bad decision can alter the fabric of their lives. In June 2021, Denise and fellow survivor Fay Rackley co-founded the Just-In-Time Initiative, an organization committed to supporting and connecting survivors of homicide through healing resources, advocacy, and community. Denise has been a featured speaker at numerous events and has received multiple recognitions for her advocacy work. Through her writing, speaking, and activism, Denise Cosby continues to transform unimaginable loss into purpose, power, and impact.

Fay Rackley, The Just-In-Time Initiative

Special Recognition Award

Recognizes a survivor of crime who has transformed their experience of victimization into positive change, healing, and leadership through promoting rights and services for victims and survivors.

Fay Rackley has 3 children, 9 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren. In July 2010, Fay lost her 19-year-old grandson, Kenneth K. Rackley a.k.a. Kenny. Kenny was murdered at Washington Park while attending a basketball game in Roxbury, MA. He was such a loving soul.

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Kenney came from a close-knit family. In addition to Fay, his grandmother, he leaves to mourn his loss his loving mother Kim, two brothers Eddie and Deandre, and a daughter he never got to meet, we affectionately call Miss Kali. In memory of her grandson Kenny, Fay decided to recognize every murdered child, his/her birthdays, and the anniversary of their deaths by posting their pictures and memories on Facebook to let others know their loved ones will never be forgotten. In June 2021, Fay and fellow survivor Denise Cosby founded the Just-In-Time Initiative, an organization committed to supporting and connecting survivors of homicide through healing resources, advocacy, and community. Fay has been a featured speaker at numerous events and has received multiple recognitions for her advocacy work. Working with other parents of murdered children and has received multiple recognitions for her advocacy work. Working with other parents of murdered children, Fay has come to recognize that “Not one stands alone.” Today, Fay stands with her legacy sister, Denise Cosby, to support, educate, and motivate others to seek peace again and healing through their program, the Just in Time Initiative.

Susan Malman Altman, Alliance for HOPE International

Public Policy Award

Recognizes a survivor of crime who has transformed their experience of victimization into impactful change through promoting legislation or advocating for policy changes that further rights and services to fellow victims and survivors.

Susan Malman Altman is a survivor-advocate who transformed profound personal loss into sustained public policy impact. After her sister, Stacy Malman Feldman, was murdered by her husband in 2015, Susan was thrust into a criminal justice process that exposed critical gaps in how domestic violence homicides — particularly staged crime scenes — are understood and investigated. Determined that no other family would face the same barriers, she committed herself to advancing systemic reform. Following the 2022 conviction of Stacy’s husband, who was sentenced to life in prison without parole, Susan emerged as a leading voice in national conversations on coercive control, hidden homicide, and victim-centered reform. As a founding member of VOICES for Victims of Hidden Homicide, a program of Alliance for HOPE International, she educates policymakers, law enforcement professionals, and communities about the warning signs and investigative complexities that too often delay justice. Her advocacy promotes stronger protections, greater accountability, and policies that center the rights and dignity of victims and survivors. In Massachusetts, Susan worked closely with Becca Rausch to address gaps in how staged crime scenes are investigated. Senator Rausch

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introduced An Act addressing staged suicides, legislation designed to honor victims of domestic violence and strengthen justice for their families. The bill advances improved law enforcement training and enhances investigative protocols in death cases involving a history of domestic violence. Susan has amplified these issues nationally through appearances on Dateline, The Tamron Hall Show, and Crime Exposé with Nancy O'Dell, using each platform to raise awareness and foster informed dialogue around domestic violence, staged homicide, and policy reform. She has also shared her story on numerous podcasts, expanding public understanding of hidden homicide and the urgent need for reform. Equally committed at the local level, Susan speaks regularly at synagogues, Jewish day schools, sororities, fraternities, and Boston College. Through Journey to Safety, the domestic violence and dating abuse program of Jewish Family & Children's Service, she shares Stacy's story with audiences across Greater Boston. Her work strengthens faith-based and community responses to domestic violence. She participates in Domestic Violence Awareness Month vigils and community roundtables, ensuring survivor voices inform public safety initiatives. She has also addressed professional audiences, including the Colorado Association for Victim Assistance, helping bridge lived experience and policy reform. Through courage, persistence, and principled advocacy, Susan has transformed personal tragedy into meaningful public policy influence.

Karen Hoffman, REACH Beyond Domestic Violence

Innovation Award

Recognizes an individual survivor, service provider, agency or organization (criminal legal and/or community-based) who has developed an innovative program or policy that help crime victims.

Karen Hoffman is an attorney whose legal practice focuses on employment matters, a founding partner of DKS Consulting Group, which provides business consulting and executive coaching, and a long-time volunteer at REACH Beyond Domestic Violence. Her work at REACH has focused on legal advocacy, training, and legal issues related to post-separation abuse. Together with Catalina Folch, LMHC, Karen co-developed and co-facilitated an innovative post-separation abuse therapeutic group for survivors at REACH, in which she provided training and education about the legal system. She is also a member of the Needham Domestic Violence Action Committee and a former member of the Needham Human Rights Committee, Needham Education Foundation, Needham Steps Up, and other groups related to social justice. Karen is a graduate of Brown University and American University Washington College of Law.

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Catalina Folch, REACH Beyond Domestic Violence

Innovation Award

Recognizes an individual survivor, service provider, agency or organization (criminal legal and/or community-based) who has developed an innovative program or policy that help crime victims.

Catalina Folch is the Director of Children, Families and Group Services at REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, where she has dedicated the past nine years to walking alongside survivors of domestic violence. A licensed mental health clinician with a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology and Art Therapy, Catalina specializes in group therapy and attachment-focused work, creating and facilitating transformative support and psychotherapy groups for both adults and children. Born and raised in Bogotá, Catalina brings cultural humility and deep gratitude to her work, especially in service to immigrant communities. She believes in the healing power of connection and community, and she has witnessed firsthand how safe spaces can help survivors reclaim their voices, rebuild trust, and rediscover their strength. Catalina shares this honor from the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance with the extraordinary team and mentors who have supported and inspired her along the way. She is especially motivated by her brave, strong, and curious daughter—and by all children whose resilience fuels her commitment to helping families break cycles of transgenerational trauma.

Beth Israel Lahey Health

Corporate Leadership Award

Recognizes a business, organization or individual from a discipline outside of the victim assistance field for their dedication to supporting crime victims and advancing the victim services community. These allied professionals are committed to innovative approaches to ending violence and supporting those impacted by it.

Beth Israel Lahey Health is a health care system that brings together academic medical centers and teaching hospitals, specialty and community hospitals, more than 4,700 physicians and 39,000 employees in a shared mission to expand access to care and advance the science and practice of medicine through groundbreaking research and education. We are helping our patients, their families, our communities, and health care as a whole, be healthier. Together, as a coordinated system of care, we are doing more than we ever could alone. We are solving more problems. Helping more people. Making more breakthroughs. Making a difference.

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Chelsea Davies, Center for Violence Prevention and Recovery

Advocate of the Year Award

Recognizes an individual from a criminal legal and/or community-based agency who has made extraordinary contributions to the lives of victims and survivors.

Chelsea Davies is a licensed independent clinical social worker who has worked at BIDMC's Center for Violence Prevention and Recovery at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center since 2018. In her current role, she specializes in supporting people impacted by multiple forms of interpersonal violence, including domestic and sexual violence, community violence and homicide, and human trafficking. She works with survivors immediately after they have been harmed in helping with acute safety and stabilization, as well as with survivors who are engaged in therapy that supports their longer-term healing goals. She has a specialized interest area in improving the medical system's response to survivors of sexual assault, as well as in training interdisciplinary groups of medical providers in trauma-informed care practices.

Steven Nelson, Norfolk County District Attorney's Office

Advocate of the Year Award

Recognizes an individual from a criminal legal and/or community-based agency who has made extraordinary contributions to the lives of victims and survivors.

For the past 15 years, I've worked within the criminal justice system, supporting victims and witnesses through court proceedings and connecting them to resources. Helping individuals find strength and justice during the most difficult times makes this work deeply rewarding.

Lori Roy, Northwestern District Attorney's Office

Advocate of the Year Award

Recognizes an individual from a criminal legal and/or community-based agency who has made extraordinary contributions to the lives of victims and survivors.

September of 1993, I began an Internship with the Victim Witness Unit of the Northwestern District Attorney's Office. I primarily worked in the Orange office assisting plaintiffs with restraining orders. December of 1993 I was hired as a Victim Witness Advocate for our Greenfield office. Over the next 5 years, I worked in Juvenile, District and Superior Court on a wide variety of cases. These included: Domestic Violence, Assault, Sexual Assault, Property



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Crimes and Homicide. In 1998 I was promoted to Advocate Supervisor and moved to the Northampton office. While in Northampton, I was responsible for similar cases as Greenfield and also tasked with supervising advocates in Hampshire County and Franklin County when needed. In addition to my Supervisory duties, in October of 2016, I returned to Greenfield and served for 2 years as the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Advocate. In January of 2018 I was promoted to Deputy Director of the Victim Witness Unit.