

# ANNUAL REPORT



MOVING VICTIMS  
TO VICTORS



# 20 21

ATLANTA VICTIM ASSISTANCE, INC.

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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Dear Friends,

Since the beginning of Atlanta Victim Assistance (AVA) in 1984, we have accomplished so much. AVA's staff numbers have increased from four to almost 20 dedicated and compassionate professional advocates and our budget rose from \$80,000 to over \$1.5 million. To date, we have assisted more than 140,000 victims of crime in the City of Atlanta on their journey to healing. This success would not have been possible without our relationships with the courts, law enforcement, and community partners, relationships that were strengthened through deep collaboration and an understanding of AVA's work and value to the City.

With these accomplishments in mind, I am pleased to announce that on April 30, 2022, I retired as AVA's Executive Director after over four decades of service. It has truly been my honor and privilege to serve AVA and the victims we help to heal. Before I embark on this next journey, I wanted to look back at the integral role AVA has played for the City of Atlanta.

We launched groundbreaking programs, including the Law Enforcement Advocacy Program (LEAP), Victims to Victors, and a domestic violence court advocacy program. Our Homicide Support Groups are a comforting refuge for those who have lost loved ones to violence. And, the new Restorative Conferencing Atlanta program is offering desperately needed alternatives to resolving youth conflict. What I am perhaps most proud of is the work we've done in the schools with young people and families who have experienced violence. We have helped them understand and face their challenges, reaching them in schools, churches, and their communities. We have walked with them as they move from victim to victor.



Brenda Muhammad, AVA Executive Director

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As AVA looks toward the future, I hope we will continue to expand the direction and purpose of victim services. These past two years have been some of our most challenging, and as a community, we must address the growing issue of trauma and its impact on our friends, neighbors, and families. I am proud to pass the torch to a former AVA advocate and long-time friend, Shontel Brunson-Wright. Her passion for the rights of victims and decades of experience in the field make her the perfect fit to carry on AVA's legacy.

Empowering survivors has been my life's work. On April 29, I was deeply moved to accept the National Crime Victim Service Award from the Office for Victims of Crime. Still, it has been the highest honor to serve as AVA's Executive Director. My retirement plans include catching up on my favorite television shows, and perhaps a trip to Switzerland. But I'll still be part of the movement to end violence in Atlanta. I have ideas on taking this work to another level: getting mothers more closely involved, planning conferences, and further strengthening relationships between agencies.

Our work is meaningful and incredibly impactful, and its importance cannot be understated. I remain immensely grateful for the opportunity to serve AVA in its various forms for nearly 40 years as both its Executive Director and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Victim Witness Assistance Program. Thank you to the many partners, colleagues, and friends I have found over the years. May we move forward together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brenda Muhammad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brenda" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Muhammad".

Brenda Muhammad

# LETTER FROM SHONTEL BRUNSON-WRIGHT

**Dear Friends of Atlanta Victim Assistance, Inc.,**

For almost 40 years, Atlanta Victim Assistance (AVA) has been serving victims of crime who are residents or visitors in this amazing city. AVA stands firm on its mission, to advocate for the fundamental rights of victims while walking alongside them with compassion, dignity, and respect, and to aid in finding healing and justice. I am Shontel Brunson-Wright, AVA's new Executive Director, and I am proud to continue the great work of AVA with joy and compassion.

Returning to AVA as its leader is a true homecoming celebration. Prior to my selection as AVA's new Executive Director, I served as the Impact Director for Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates, Inc. in which I supported and shared the outstanding work of the CASA Network throughout the state of Georgia. In my last twenty-four years, I've served in numerous leadership roles, including serving as the State of Georgia's Victim of Crime Act State Administrator and working as the Program Director for the Victim Assistance Unit of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. I am a proud graduate of Saint Augustine's University, where I studied Sociology and Social Work.



Shontel Brunson-Wright, AVA Executive Director

I am both honored and humbled by the Board's decision to entrust AVA's executive leadership to me. I know firsthand from the work that I have done in my career, including the time I spent with AVA, the indispensability of AVA's advocacy for and service to crime victims and their families.

I have long admired Brenda Muhammad and her legacy of service to the Atlanta community through AVA. I look forward to working closely with the many important stakeholders to chart out new, positive ground for AVA's future in a manner that will build upon Brenda's achievements.

Sincerely,

Shontel Brunson-Wright

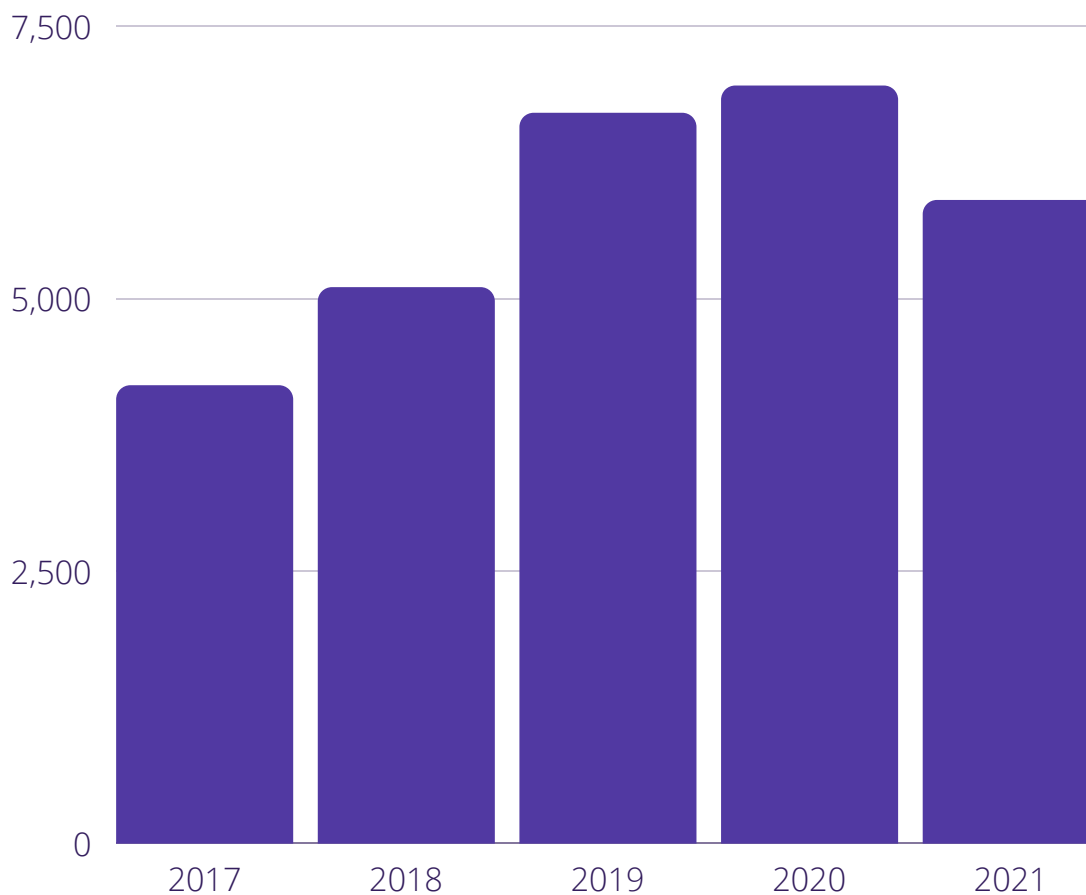
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shontel Brunson-Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shontel" being more prominent.

Executive Director



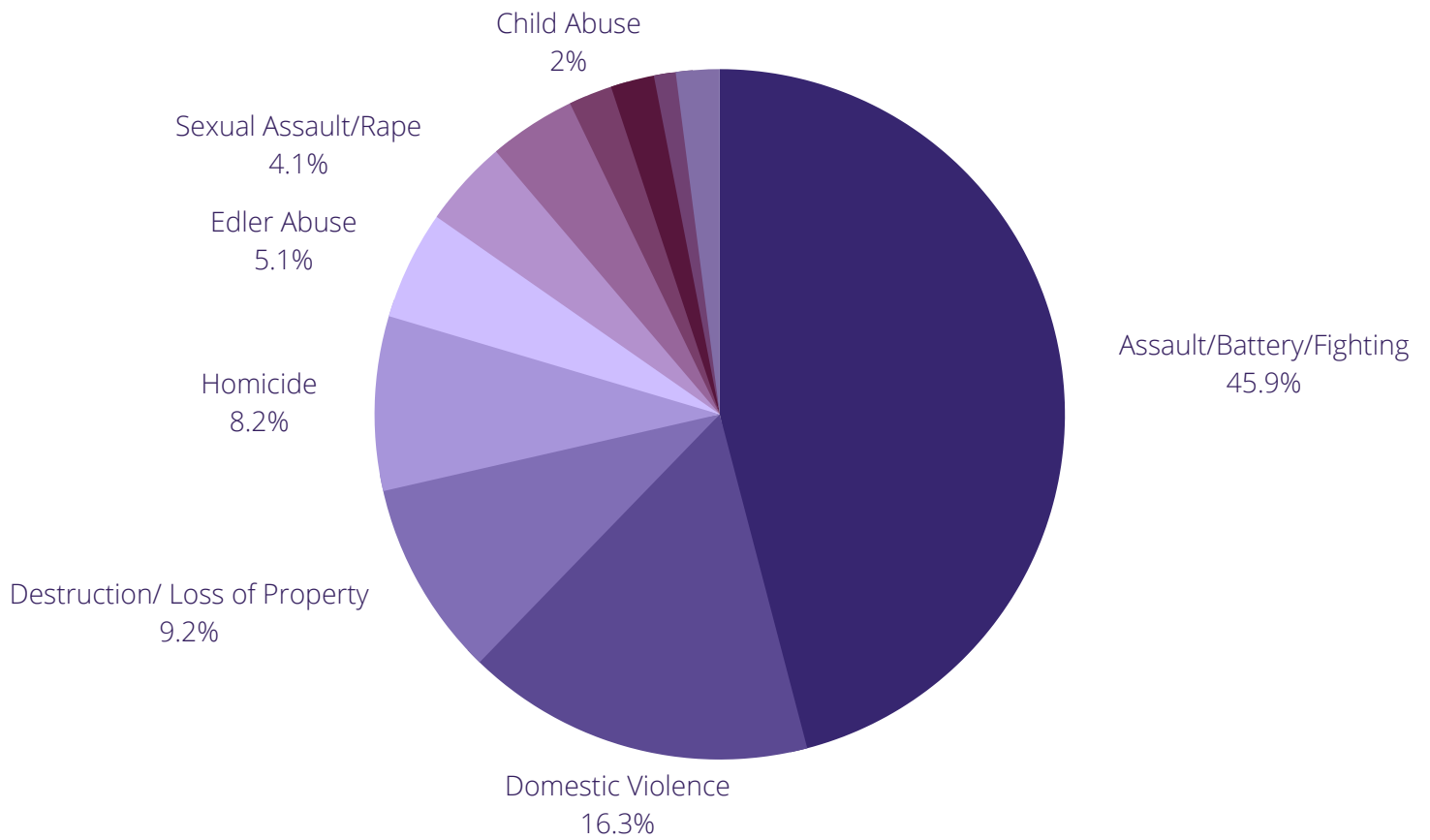
# CLIENTS SERVED

In 2021, Atlanta Victim Assistance (AVA) was more committed than ever to assist victims of crime with compassion, dignity, and respect. To effectively serve victims across the city, our staff includes 20 advocates who are placed in Atlanta Municipal Court, Atlanta Police Department Zones and Special Crime Victims Units, and two Title I high schools in the Atlanta Public Schools district. Our dedicated staff remain on the front lines, ensuring that victims of crime have access to comprehensive services.



**\*ANNUAL AVA CLIENTS SERVED**

**\*2021 AVA VICTIMS SERVED BY CATEGORY**



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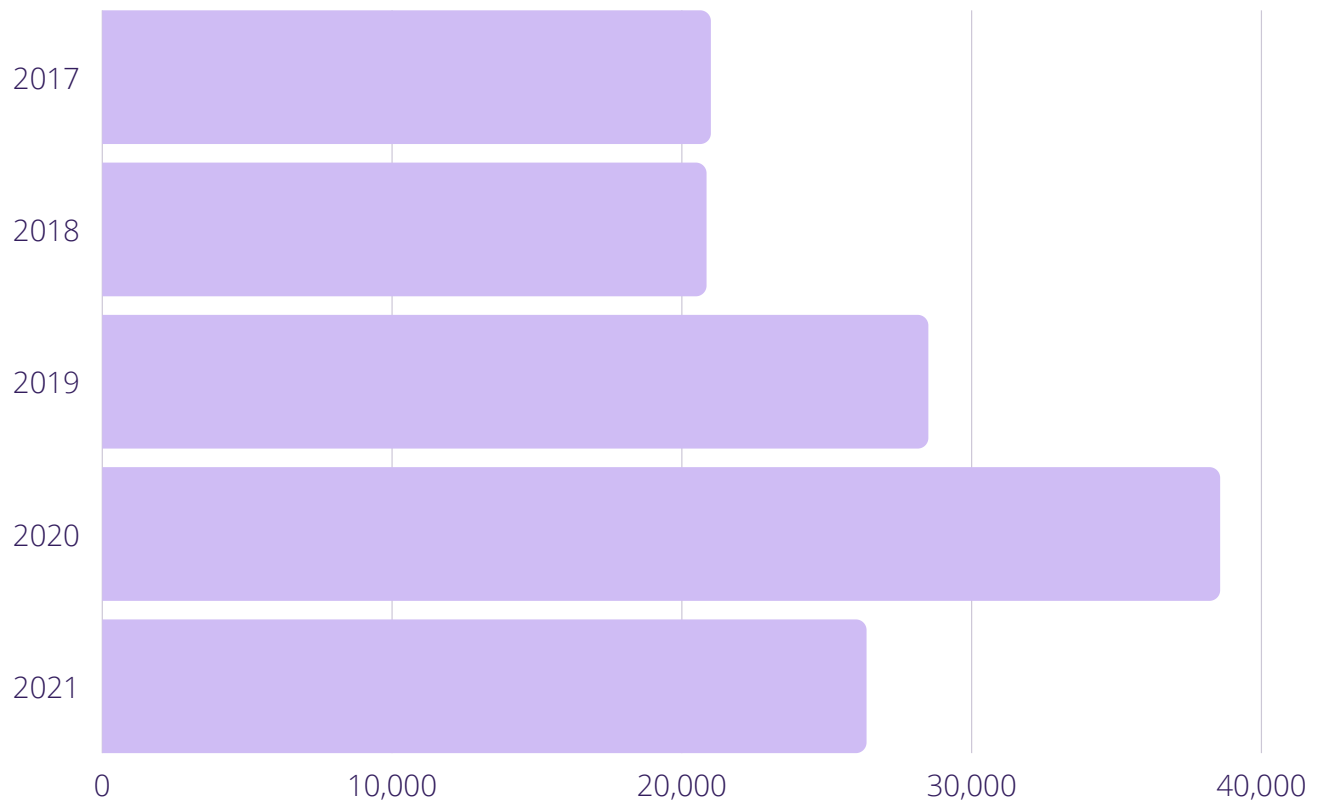
# AVA SERVICES

## **PERSONAL & CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY**

- Secure Victim Rights, Remedies, and Benefits
- Safety Planning
- TPO and Special Condition Bond Order Assistance
- Interpretation Services
- Employer, insurance, landlord, creditor, and school mediation
- Court orientation and accompaniment
- Information on court processes and notification of hearing dates
- Sentencing explanation & post-sentencing support

## **TYPES OF INFORMATION & REFERRALS**

- Counseling referrals
- Referrals to domestic violence shelters
- Referrals for emergency assistance (housing, financial, medical)
- Legal Aid referrals
- Referrals to immigrant support services
- Community awareness & education on Georgia Crime Victims Bill of Rights
- Community support agencies



**\*ANNUAL AVA SERVICES PROVIDED TO VICTIMS OF CRIME**



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# AVA PROGRAMS UPDATES

## **Youth Programs**

Our Victims 2 Victors (V2V) program works with students and their caregivers who have been exposed to homicide and family violence. In 2021, 91 students took part in V2V at Maynard Jackson and Carver STEAM high schools, learning to break the cycle of violence; build their skills in managing anger, grief, and stress; and gain techniques for effective conflict resolution. Of those, 86% shared they are achieving the goals they set for themselves within V2V and 92% are using the skills they learned in their support groups.

## **Restorative Conferencing Atlanta**

RCA is a restorative justice program that empowers young people and their communities to resolve their conflicts outside of Fulton County's juvenile court system. In 2021, three facilitators were trained to conduct community conferences. RCA staff had conversations with five community organizations to discuss potential partnership and referral opportunities. Staff also focused on developing a referral process with the Fulton County courts and strategizing on how to approach schools and other community organizations. Georgia State University MSW students created a resource guide for conference participants.

## **Homicide Support Group**

Eleven monthly support groups were held in NPU-V for surviving loved ones of homicide victims. Support groups provided opportunities for 120 people to commemorate their lost loved ones, heal, and move through their pain. AVA's annual Celebration of Life candlelight vigil was held in person in December and included singers and musicians, guest speakers, and a vigil to celebrate lives lost and mourn their deaths.

## **National Crime Victims' Rights Week**

AVA commemorated the 2021 National Crime Victims' Rights Week by emphasizing the importance of community support in helping crime victims. Through a live-streamed event, we shared the release of our resource guide, featuring victims' stories and information on local resources.



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# DONORS

## Foundation & Corporate Funding

AEC Trust

Annie E. Casey Atlanta Civic Site

Georgia Pacific

Georgia Power Foundation

Hauser Family Foundation

Homestead Foundation

Jesse Parker Williams Foundation

Life Comes From It

Microsoft

New York Life Foundation

United Way Metro ATL

## Government Funding

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Fulton County Community Services Program

Family Violence Prevention & Services Act

## Individual Donors

Rachel Jellinek

Courtney Eshleman

Mackeia Anderson

Melinda Pittman

Mel Hewitt

Juliet Chen

Melinda Pittman

Linda Dupree

Brandon Love

Alexandria Fuller

Monica Barnard

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# PARTNERS

## AVA PARTNERS

City of Atlanta Police Department

City of Atlanta Municipal Court

Office of the City Solicitor

HOPE Atlanta

Atlanta Center for Self-Sufficiency

ChopArt

The YMCA

City of Atlanta Fire Department

Georgia Commission on Hearing Impaired and Deaf Persons

Atlanta Public Schools

CHRIS 180

Emmaus House

Purpose Built Schools-Atlanta

Partnership Against Domestic Violence

The Boys and Girls Club



# OUR TEAM

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Shontel Brunson-Wright, Executive Director  
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 Angel Spencer  
 Gasha Wood  
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# CONNECT WITH AVA

Help victims of crime become victors. Donate online at [www.atlantava.org](http://www.atlantava.org). We also accept donations of supplies, nonperishable food items, and Donor Advised Funds. AVA's EIN is 32-0017011. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. All charitable donations are fully tax-deductible to the extent of the law.