



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

# **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL**

**2013 ANNUAL REPORT**



## **MISSION**

- ◆ *To reduce the incidence of domestic violence and create a safe community for families to live free of abuse.*

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2013**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DVCC MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>PAGE 3</b>
<b>TERM OF SERVICE</b>	<b>PAGE 4</b>
<b>SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS</b>	<b>PAGE 4</b>
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>PAGE 4</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>PAGE 5</b>
<b>COMMITTEE REPORTS &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>VICTIM SERVICES</b>	<b>PAGE 8</b>
<b>EDUCATION AND OUTREACH</b>	<b>PAGE 10</b>
<b>LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PLANNING</b>	<b>PAGE 14</b>
<b>OFFENDER PROGRAM &amp; POLICY</b>	<b>PAGE 15</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>PAGE 18</b>



# MEMBERSHIP

## EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

**MARIA ALVARADO**  
*COMMISSIONER*  
*FOR JUDITH VAUGHAN-PRATHER*  
*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*  
*MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR*  
*WOMEN*

**NOMINATION PENDING**  
*FOR UMA AHLUWALIA, DIRECTOR*  
*MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF*  
*HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES*

**THE HONORABLE PHIL ANDREWS**  
**CHAIR, DVCC**  
*COUNCILMEMBER*  
*MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL*

**THE HONORABLE MARIELSA BERNARD**  
*ASSOCIATE JUDGE*  
*FOR THE HONORABLE*  
*JOHN W. DEBELIUS III*  
*ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE*  
*CIRCUIT COURT FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY*

**SHIRLEY BRANDMAN**  
*BOARD OF EDUCATION*  
*MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

**LAURA CHASE**  
*DEPUTY STATE'S ATTORNEY*  
*FOR JOHN J. MCCARTHY*  
*MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY*

**RUSSELL HAMILL**  
*ASSISTANT CHIEF OF POLICE*  
*FOR J. THOMAS MANGER, CHIEF*  
*MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE*

**HANNAH SASSOON (THROUGH APRIL 2013)**  
*FOR NEW MEMBER, NOMINATION PENDING*  
*FOR DARREN M. POPKIN, SHERIFF*  
*MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF*

**THE HONORABLE KARLA SMITH**  
**VICE CHAIR, DVCC**  
*ASSOCIATE JUDGE*  
*FOR THE HONORABLE EUGENE WOLFE*  
*ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE*  
*DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND FOR*  
*MONTGOMERY COUNTY*

**WILLIAM SOLLOD**  
*REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR*  
*MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY &*  
*CORRECTIONAL SERVICES*

**NOMINATION PENDING**  
*FOR ARTHUR M. WALLENSTEIN, DIRECTOR*  
*DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION AND*  
*REHABILITATION*

## PUBLIC MEMBERS

**DONNA BAIRD**  
*COMMUNITY MEMBER*

**DOROTHY FAIT**  
*COMMUNITY MEMBER*

**RESA LEVY**  
*COMMUNITY MEMBER*

**JESSICA LEVY**  
*STUDENT MEMBER*

**DONNA RISMILLER, ESQ.**  
*ATTORNEY MEMBER*

**ANA VALDEZ**  
*COMMUNITY MEMBER*

## STAFF

**THOMAS MANION**  
*MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF*

## COUNCIL INFORMATION

### **TERM OF SERVICE**

There are seventeen voting members of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council who serve without compensation and are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Five are Ex-Officio members who serve at the request of the County Council: the Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court; the Administrative Judge of the District Court; the Sheriff; the State's Attorney; and the Regional Administrator for the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. There are five Ex-Officio members who are appointed by the County Executive: a member of the County Council, selected by the Council President; the Directors of the Departments of Correction and Rehabilitation; Health and Human Services; Police; Commission for Women; and Montgomery County Public Schools, Board of Education. In addition, there are five members of the general public appointed by the County Executive for renewable three year terms, one of whom is an attorney representing domestic violence victims, and four who have a demonstrated interest in domestic violence issues, including at least one who is a survivor of domestic violence. In 2010 the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council's code pertaining to membership was amended to add a student member. The student member is a high school junior or senior who is appointed to serve a one year term which can be renewed for one additional year.

### **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council meets bi-monthly on the second Thursday of the month, and has met forty-four times since September 2006. Meetings are open to the public.

### **LEADERSHIP**

In January 2013, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council elected as its Chair, Phil Andrews, Councilmember, representing the Montgomery County Council, and as Vice Chair, Hannah Sassoon, Domestic Violence Coordinator, representing the Office of the Sheriff. In March 2013, Hannah Sassoon vacated her seat on the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council due to her retirement. Judge Karla Smith, representing the District Court of Maryland for Montgomery County, was elected as the new Vice Chair.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the seventh year since its creation, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council has advanced its mission of reducing the incidence of domestic violence and creating a safe community where families are free of abuse. In 2012-2013 the four committees, Victim Services, Education and Outreach, Legislative and Policy Planning and Offender Program and Policy, have each identified focus areas and made progress on executing recommendations from the previous report. This report summarizes the accomplishments of the past year and makes recommendations for the next year.

Special thanks go to the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation for its continued, unwavering support of Domestic Violence Coordinating Council initiatives and the Montgomery County Family Justice Center.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- ◆ Finalization and approval of plans for the Montgomery County Family Justice Center (FJC) expansion to additional office space to meet the increased demand for services;
- ◆ Partnership with Montgomery College and the Montgomery College Foundation to offer scholarship assistance to FJC clients interested in career training or otherwise furthering their education;
- ◆ Reduction of wait time for video conference hearings for temporary ex-parte protective orders;
- ◆ Collaboration with the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) to create an informative video about the services available at the FJC, which is played during roll call to increase officers' awareness of and referrals to the FJC;
- ◆ Collaboration with MCPD to issue a police bulletin establishing that officers must refer all victims of domestic violence, regardless of the outcome of investigation, to the FJC during its hours of operation;
- ◆ Exploration of collaborative opportunities to establish transitional housing for families leaving the Betty Ann Krahnke (BAK) domestic violence shelter;
- ◆ Collaboration with multiple County agencies and community organizations for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Conference, which was held on March 3, 2013;
- ◆ Coordination of the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest, which was held in conjunction with National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month;
- ◆ Presentation of the Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum to 1,904 youth participants in Montgomery County Public Schools as well as various youth groups in the community;
- ◆ Participation in the Montgomery County Public Schools Back-to-School Fair on August 24, 2013 to launch the 2014 PSA Contest and to promote the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Choose Respect Healthy Teen Dating Conference and the FJC;
- ◆ Participation in the School and Community United in Partnership (SCUP) Conference in September, 2012 to promote awareness of teen dating violence prevention initiatives and the FJC;
- ◆ Implementation of a Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM) pilot program at Springbrook High School;
- ◆ Development of FJC Five-Language Information Cards promoting the FJC and the services it provides to victims of domestic violence and their families;

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## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS (CONTINUED)**

- ◆ Collaboration with community and agency partners to install FJC Five-Language Information Card receptacles in public libraries, regional services centers and other public places;
- ◆ Collaboration with partner agencies to promote increased use of the Pre-Trial Supervision Unit (PTSU) and the Abuser Intervention Program (AIP) for domestic violence offenders;
- ◆ Creation of a standardized electronic referral form that can be used by PTSU and the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to refer offenders to AIP for treatment;
- ◆ Exploration of appropriate use of the Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) in offender programs (PTSU, DPSCS Community Supervision, and AIP);
- ◆ Coordination with the FJC Foundation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual FJC Foundation Benefit, which was held October 14, 2012;
- ◆ Continuation of the joint FJC and FJC Foundation quarterly newsletter;
- ◆ Continuation of the Panera Bread “Doughnation” grant through the FJC Foundation;
- ◆ Ongoing distribution of Spanish and English FJC Police Cards for officers and deputies to give to domestic violence victims;
- ◆ Ongoing distribution of FJC brochures in English and Spanish to public and community partners;
- ◆ Collaboration with the Officer of Intergovernmental Relations and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence to support numerous bills in the 2012 Maryland General Assembly.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2013-2014**

- ◆ Continued exploration of collaborative opportunities to establish transitional housing for families leaving the Betty Ann Krahnke (BAK) domestic violence shelter;
- ◆ Engaging young men in the violence prevention initiative through the county-wide expansion of the CBIM program;
- ◆ Continued collaboration with community partners and the judiciary in order to facilitate greater use of PTSU services in domestic violence cases;
- ◆ Exploration of instituting the Judicial Review process in domestic violence cases in the Montgomery County Circuit Court, in consultation with the judiciary;
- ◆ Ongoing collaboration among FJC agency partners and the FJC Foundation to continue identifying gaps in domestic violence victim services, and then exploring appropriate, sustainable solutions to fill those gaps;
- ◆ Continued collaboration with County agencies, organizations and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through the Choose Respect Montgomery initiative;
- ◆ Continued promotion of the FJC and its services through expansion of the FJC Five-Language Information Card initiative;
- ◆ Ongoing collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence to promote legislation that supports the mission of the DVCC;
- ◆ Ongoing open communication between the Abused Persons Program (APP), PTSU and DPSCS to facilitate successful implementation of the newly developed electronic referral form;



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**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2013-2014 (CONTINUED)**

- ◆ Creation of a system to accurately identify the proportion of domestic violence offenders that are military veterans;
- ◆ Evaluation of whether traditional offender treatment programs are responsive to the unique needs of veterans;
- ◆ Evaluation of procedures at the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that all Lethality Assessment Protocols (LAPs) are being collected and catalogued for easy access.

# **VICTIM SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **CHAIR: HANNAH SASSOON**

The Victim Services Committee has been collaborating actively with Family Justice Center (FJC) agency partners, the FJC Foundation and community volunteers for ongoing sustainability and effective operation of the FJC. Of particular interest this year was the desire to establish and fund programs that not only promote safety for victims of domestic violence, but also assist these victims in locating a path to self-sufficiency. Primary objectives successfully achieved in the previous year are outlined below, as well as recommendations for the coming year.

### **MONTGOMERY COUNTY FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER**

Since opening its doors in April 2009, approximately five thousand victims representing over one hundred different countries of origin have sought services at the Montgomery County FJC with the goal of ending domestic violence in their lives. FJCs are recognized nationally by the law enforcement, medical and mental health communities as a “best-practice” for responding to victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence victims who come to the FJC are able to receive a broad array of critical Montgomery County services. These services include advocacy in the form of individualized, comprehensive safety plans; assistance with navigating the court system and the filing of protective orders including video links to the courts for temporary ex-parte orders ; representation at protective order hearings; specific programs available to immigrant victims under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA); law enforcement intervention in criminal prosecution of offenders; counseling for victims and their children in both individual and group settings; on-site child care services to support victims through while the client is accessing FJC services; and help with obtaining basic needs, such as shelter, food, housing, and transportation often all lost to victims and their families forced to flee their homes.

### **EXPANSIONS IN CLIENT SERVICES**

The Montgomery County FJC opened over four years ago with three primary on-site County agencies, to include the State’s Attorney’s Office, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and the Sheriff’s Office. Since then, the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD), Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services, House of Ruth Maryland were added to provide specialized services to FJC clients. The Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services were also invited to collaborate with the State’s Attorney’s Office regarding offender cases and accountability. This year, plans were finalized and approved for the FJC expansion to additional office space to meet the increased demands for services. The additional space will accommodate the staff of partner agencies at the FJC including expanded counseling services through the House of Ruth Maryland and an increased presence from the MCPD Family Crimes Division. Additionally, this year, in an effort to provide clients a path from safety to self-sufficiency, the Victim Services Committee and the FJC Foundation reached out to representatives of Montgomery College and the Montgomery College Foundation, who agreed to assist with the scholarship process for FJC clients interested in career training or furthering their education.



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## VIDEO CONFERENCING

Beginning in December 2010, the FJC hosted a pilot program in which domestic violence victims could obtain temporary ex-parte protective orders via videoconference. Following the success of the program, Chief Judge Robert Bell, at the recommendation of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), signed an order institutionalizing video conferencing in Maryland for such orders. The AOC also made recommendations to improve the FJC's video conferencing program, which include improving wait time for hearings and increasing the frequency of use of the service. Over the past year, the Victim Services Committee has addressed these recommendations and reduced the wait time for video conference hearings. The FJC also collaborated with MCPD to create an informative video about the services available at the FJC, which is available on MCPD's electronic bulletin board and is played during roll call to increase officers' awareness of and referrals to the FJC. In January 2013, MCPD Chief J. Thomas Manger issued a bulletin which established that police must refer all victims of domestic violence, regardless of the outcome of investigation, to the FJC during its hours of operation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Victim Services Committee recommends ongoing collaboration among FJC agency partners and the FJC Foundation to continue identifying gaps in domestic violence victim services, and then exploring appropriate, sustainable solutions to fill those gaps.

## TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES

In the past year, the Victim Services Committee and Coordinating Council as a whole has explored the problems associated with the Betty Ann Krahnke (BAK) Center – frequently being at maximum capacity. The BAK Center, which has 54 beds, primarily faces challenges at discharge, with many of the shelter's residents having difficulty transitioning to a safer and longer-term housing situation, leading to a large number of overstays. The Victim Services Committee and Coordinating Council as a whole agreed that it would be beneficial to establish transitional housing for clients from the BAK Center who need more assistance on their path to self-sufficiency. One particular partnership being explored by DHHS is with Saint Ann's Center for Children, Youth and Families, which is a well-equipped, furnished facility that provides on-site education as well as vocational training to clients. This center could potentially serve as a transitional placement facility for families that have been at the BAK center for a minimum of 30 days. The details of any such partnership would have to be carefully discussed and established in the coming year.

**RECOMMENDATION:** In an effort to reduce overstays at the Betty Ann Krahnke (BAK) Center, and to help domestic violence victims locate a path from safety to self-sufficiency, the Victim Services Committee recommends exploring collaborative opportunities to establish transitional housing for families leaving the BAK Center.

# EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

## CHAIR: DONNA RISMILLER

The Education and Outreach Committee has continued to focus on its teen dating violence prevention initiative during the past year. This initiative, titled Choose Respect Montgomery, includes three primary activities: the annual conference for teens and their parents, the public service announcement contest and the healthy teen dating curriculum which is presented in the County's middle and high schools. The Committee has also launched a new, multi-lingual public outreach program to promote awareness of the resources available at the Montgomery County Family Justice Center. Highlights from each of these activities, as well as recommendations for future improvement, are listed below.

### **CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY – TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE**

#### **HEALTHY TEEN DATING CONFERENCE**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Conference was held this year on Sunday, March 3, 2013 at the Germantown Campus of Montgomery College. The conference, sponsored by the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC), Verizon Wireless, Montgomery College and numerous Montgomery County agencies and community groups, is organized to promote respect in dating relationships and raise awareness about the prevalence of teen dating violence. This year's theme was "Move Beyond the Myths," which was selected in an effort to eliminate common misconceptions about dating abuse, such as the belief that abuse is only physical, or that if a friend is in trouble, they will ask for help. These preconceived notions effectively excuse abusive behavior in relationships, and it is important to expose these myths and educate teens on how to advocate for themselves, support friends and family, and put an end to controlling behavior before it goes too far.

More than 375 teens, parents, educators, youth service providers and public officials attended the half day conference. The event opened with an energetic welcome from the emcees, Hot 99.5 DJ Toby Knapp and NBC News4 Reporter Jackie Bensen, followed by a premiere of the top five entries in the **Healthy Teen Dating Public Service Announcement Contest**. Ivy Rose, winner of the University of Maryland's Battle of the Bands performed several selections to open the conference. Participants were then grouped by age and gender for educational workshops on healthy teen dating and the prevention of dating violence. Workshops were offered in both English and Spanish. John J. McCarthy, State's Attorney for Montgomery County, Sheriff Darren M. Popkin, and Councilmember Phil Andrews (DVCC Chair), presented a proclamation recognizing March as Teen Dating Abuse Awareness Month in Montgomery County. The winners of the Healthy Teen Dating Public Service Announcement Contest were announced, and the conference was brought to a close with the distribution of raffle prizes and free pizza for all attendees.

The conference evaluations were very positive, with 98% of the attendees reporting overall approval of the event. In fact, 81% of attendees reported that the conference was either above or well above their expectations. Teens, parents, educators and youth service providers all seemed to grasp the importance of "Moving Beyond the Myths" and learned not only what resources are available to victims of dating abuse, but also how to talk about these issues in a healthy and safe way. The surveys are assessed by conference planners and will be taken into consideration when planning future events.

The DVCC is very appreciative of the event sponsorship from Verizon Wireless, Montgomery College and its numerous County and Community partners. Plans for the 5<sup>th</sup> annual conference scheduled for early 2014 are already underway.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT CONTEST**

For the fourth consecutive year, the DVCC sponsored the Healthy Teen Dating Public Service Announcement Contest for local teens in middle and high school. This contest is intended to evoke teens' interest, awareness and perspective on the issue of teen dating violence, while also allowing them to be creative. Participants are challenged to submit a 60-second video production that promotes attention to dating abuse. They are also asked to include resource information such as the phone number to a local or national helpline. Prizes include a cash prize, recognition for their school or community group and the opportunity to have their production broadcast locally. This year's contest was sponsored by Verizon Wireless. Finalists were announced in February, 2013 via the Choose Respect Montgomery Facebook page in recognition of National Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Month, and the winners were announced at the **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Choose Respect Healthy Teen Dating Conference**.

A total of 34 submissions were received this year, which is twice the submissions received last year. The top 3 projects can be viewed by clicking on the following links:

1<sup>st</sup> place – “Wake Up” from Richard Montgomery High School: <http://youtu.be/7WxRqRK1KXQ>

2<sup>nd</sup> place – “This Is Not Love” from Sherwood High School: <http://youtu.be/QXCN6bJ0oDs>

3<sup>rd</sup> place – “Speak Up” from Sherwood High School: <http://youtu.be/rwLzjIazfeE>

The DVCC and its partners believe the contest provides a worthwhile opportunity for teens, and launched the 2014 contest at the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Back-to-School Fair on August 24<sup>th</sup>. The upcoming contest will again be held in recognition of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month scheduled for February, 2014. Entries will be accepted in English and Spanish and cash prizes will be awarded to the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners in addition to the opportunity to have the winning production broadcast locally. The sponsoring school, youth group, teacher or adult leader will also receive recognition.

## **HEALTHY TEEN DATING CURRICULUM**

The Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum is available in both English and Spanish. It is an instructional presentation based on nationally recognized dating abuse prevention curricula to include: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Choose Respect, Liz Claiborne, Love is Not Abuse and Break the Cycle. The 45 minute PowerPoint presentation provides multiple opportunities for student involvement, and features brief videos on various dating abuse topics such as verbal abuse, abuse through technology and how to intervene as a responsible witness. The conversations with teens during the presentation specifically focus on:

- 1) Components of healthy dating behaviors such as trust and safe, non-threatening communication;
- 2) Identification of early warning signs of abusive dating behavior to include control, isolation, criticism and manipulation;
- 3) Identification of the roles in abusive dating relationships; and
- 4) Addressing dating violence when it is witnessed in school or among social circles.

Local resources and national teen dating abuse help lines and websites are also discussed. Every participant is given a Choose Respect Montgomery bookmark which contains the contact information for the Montgomery County Family Justice Center and the National Dating Abuse Helpline. Active participants during the presentation also receive a silicone Choose Respect Montgomery wristband containing the phrase, “Respect: Give it! Get it! Get involved!”

The Choose Respect Montgomery Teen Dating Curriculum is offered at no cost and was approved for middle and high school students by the MCPS Administration and the MCPS Citizen Advisory Board on Family Life and Human Development. Requests for the presentation are received at the Sheriff’s Office from various school personnel, such as health teachers, counselors and school principals. The school principal ultimately approves the presentation for the particular student audience. Family Violence Division Prosecutors and Community Prosecutors from the Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office conduct the presentations. Prior to a school visit, all school personnel are notified of the visit and provided with a list of community resources. The resource list helps to prepare school staff in the event that a teen comes to them and expresses a concern regarding a teen dating violence matter.

In its third year since implementation, the Choose Respect Montgomery Teen Dating Curriculum was presented to 1,904 youth participants from MCPS and community groups by three dedicated presenters. Recently, the curriculum was converted into Prezi format and approved for middle and high school students by MCPS. Prezi is cloud-based presentation software that makes the curriculum more visually appealing and interactive than the previous PowerPoint version. The basic content remains unchanged.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Choose Respect Montgomery initiative has been a successful prevention and outreach project over the past three years. It is the recommendation of the Education and Outreach Committee to continue collaboration with County agencies, organizations and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through the Choose Respect Montgomery initiative.

## **ENGAGING YOUNG MEN IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

### **COACHING BOYS INTO MEN**

Historically, intimate partner violence prevention has been viewed solely as a women’s issue. Anti-violence organizations and programs were established as safe spaces where women exposed to intimate partner and sexual violence could find support and healing. In recent years, however, attention has been drawn to the importance of engaging men and boys in violence prevention as well. Many promising programs that involve young men are being introduced across the United States, including Futures Without Violence’s program Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM). CBIM is a free toolkit that can be implemented by any coach and used with any male sports team. The tools available are comprehensive and assist coaches with planning important discussions with athletes about respect for women and girls, and that violence doesn’t equal strength. Through CBIM, athletes learn skills to avoid violence and abuse in their relationships.

A pilot CBIM program was implemented at Springbrook High School with their varsity football team. The Education and Outreach Committee partnered with the Montgomery County FJC Foundation and Montgomery College, which hosts a similar program called “Men for Change,” to secure scholarship incentives ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000 for young men at Springbrook High School. The Committee is also securing funding to provide cash awards and plaques to particularly deserving students in the CBIM program, as nominated by their coach. These awards will be given at the end of the current athletic season.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Education and Outreach Committee recommends engaging young men in the violence prevention initiative through the county-wide expansion of the CBIM program.

**PROMOTING AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIM  
RESOURCES**

**FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER FIVE-LANGUAGE INFORMATION CARDS**

Victims of domestic violence often do not know what services are available to them, or where to go to seek help. In an effort to promote awareness of these resources, the Education and Outreach Committee developed Family Justice Center (FJC) information cards. These cards contain the location of the FJC, contact information, a list of available services, and other important information. The content is presented in five different languages – English, Spanish, French, Chinese and Korean – and is pre-folded to easily fit in a pocket or purse. Clear, wall-affixed receptacles were procured for the distribution of these cards. Each receptacle also has a sticker on it containing a QR code which, when scanned with a cell phone, leads directly to a PDF version of the FJC information card.

Receptacles and cards are already on display in each of the five Montgomery County Regional Services Centers as well as five public libraries – Aspen Hill, Germantown, Rockville, Wheaton and Silver Spring. Barring any major problems or concerns, the receptacles and cards will be available in all public libraries countywide in the coming months. The Education and Outreach Committee is currently coordinating with other agencies and departments to also make FJC information cards available in courthouses, police stations and liquor stores throughout the county.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued promotion of the Family Justice Center and its services through expansion of the FJC Five-Language Information Card initiative.

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PLANNING COMMITTEE CHAIR: DOROTHY FAIT

The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee focused this year on supporting certain domestic violence-related legislation in the state of Maryland. Below is a summary of supported legislation as well as the committee's recommendation for the coming year.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION UPDATES**

Several bills related to domestic violence were proposed to the Maryland General Assembly this year. Those bills supported by the Legislative and Policy Committee are summarized below:

### **HB 478/SB 861 – Crimes – Committing a Crime of Violence in the Presence of a Minor - Penalties**

The proposed legislation would enhance the penalty for persons who are convicted of committing a crime of violence when such persons know, or should reasonably have known, that a minor is within sight or hearing of the violent crime. The penalty is separate from and consecutive to the sentence for the crime.

### **HB 853/SB 417 – Family Law – Domestic Violence - Permanent Final Protective Orders**

The proposed legislation eases the requirements for petitioners to obtain a permanent protective order. Currently, a petitioner is eligible for a permanent protective order if the respondent has been (1) convicted of certain enumerated crimes related to the act of abuse that led to the issuance of a final protective order and (2) served a sentence of at least five years. The proposed legislation adds the crime of second degree assault to the list of enumerated crimes and alters the language of the law so that the respondent need only be *sentenced* to a term of imprisonment of five years, rather than requiring that the respondent *served* five years.

### **HB 1230/SB 490 – Domestic Violence – Persons Eligible for Relief and Orders to Vacate Home**

This bill would move dating violence and sexual assault out of the Peace Order statute and into the Protective Order statute. Dating violence and sexual assault are volatile cases that need the special attention that a protective order provides. Over 41 other states currently include dating violence in their protective order statutes.

### **HB 892/SB 731 – Family Law – Protective Orders - Additional Relief**

This legislation authorizes a judge to order a respondent to stay a specified distance away from a petitioner in a final protective order.

Unfortunately, none of the above bills were passed by the Maryland General Assembly this year. However, it is possible that some may be reintroduced in the coming year.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence to promote legislation that supports the mission of the DVCC.

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# OFFENDER PROGRAM AND POLICY COMMITTEE

The Offender Program and Policy Committee includes members from Montgomery County and Maryland State agencies that focus on domestic violence offender intervention. Committee members remain focused on evaluating offender programs within their individual departments and identifying collaborative opportunities to improve communication and offender services as a whole. The details of the committee's departmental and system review as well as recommendations for improvement are outlined below.

## **EXAMINATION OF OFFENDER INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

### **PRE-TRIAL SUPERVISION UNIT**

Montgomery County's Pre-Trial Supervision Unit (PTSU), within the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, is designed to ensure that all eligible defendants are provided the opportunity for pre-trial release within the confines of public safety. The PTSU upholds public safety through community monitoring and referral to services that will increase the likelihood of appearance for trial, reduce the risk for re-arrest and, in domestic violence cases, protect the victim. Mandated conditions of pre-trial release vary based on a defendant's history and can include many options from intense monitoring via electronic global positioning (GPS), a curfew and participation in domestic violence offender treatment programs, to regular, in person reporting to a PTSU case supervisor. In Montgomery County, PTSU case supervisors are part of the coordinated response to domestic violence and maintain effective working relationships with victim service providers, prosecutors, and law enforcement. This year, PTSU and several other agency partners, met with representatives from the District Court Commissioners Office to discuss pre-trial supervision of defendants. The meeting was very productive, and PTSU subsequently observed an increase in offender referrals.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends that PTSU continue to collaborate with its community partners and the judiciary in order to facilitate greater use of PTSU services in domestic violence cases.

### **MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY & CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SUPERVISION**

Domestic violence offenders are referred to supervision through the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) following sentencing in a criminal case, or upon release after a period of incarceration. There are departmental policies which stipulate the offender supervision process and specific guidelines outlining protocols of supervision. Domestic violence offenders are initially supervised at the highest level, which includes twice monthly face to face meetings with a probation agent, home visits, and ongoing monthly verification of home address, employment and treatment participation. Montgomery County's three supervision offices each have an agent dedicated to supervising domestic violence cases, and each of the specialized domestic violence agents has a caseload in excess of 200 probationers.

This year, the Offender Program and Policy Committee discussed the use of judicial review hearings in domestic violence cases, which the National Institute of Justice considers an innovative, promising practice.

Judicial review hearings require a defendant to appear before a judge at a post-conviction review hearing to demonstrate that he or she is complying with the conditions of probation. It is believed to improve offender compliance and victim safety. Under this practice, probation agents are expected to maintain contact with offenders and their victims. Victim input is sought prior to each review session, compliance by the defendant is valued and rewarded, and violations, when found, result in prompt, graduated sanctions. Depending on the violation, these sanctions may include jail, extra sessions at batterer intervention meetings, additional protective conditions, substance abuse testing and treatment, or more frequent judicial reviews before the judge. If appropriate, judicial review hearings also allow for terms of probation to be modified to support and address the particular needs of the victim and/or defendant.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends exploration of instituting the Judicial Review process in domestic violence cases in the Montgomery County Circuit Court, in consultation with the judiciary.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, ABUSER INTERVENTION PROGRAM**

The Abuser Intervention Program (AIP) for domestic violence offenders in Montgomery County is offered through the Abused Persons Program (APP) and contracted through J&E Associates, which is a Maryland State Certified Offender Treatment Program. Referrals to the AIP occur after an offender is arrested for a domestic violence related crime, post conviction, or as a condition of a protective order. Following the initial assessment, an offender is assigned to a twenty-three week treatment curriculum, which provides domestic violence education in a group setting with one to two therapists. The group treatment modality consists of a cognitive-behavioral approach and is designed to advance participants through the contemplative stages of change.

In the last year, PTSU, DPSCS and APP have worked collaboratively to create a single, electronic referral form that can be used by PTSU and DPSCS to refer offenders to AIP for treatment. The form contains overall offender information, victim information, agent/caseworker information, and case information for easy access and reference. To streamline the referral process further, APP set up an e-mail account as a repository for all incoming referral forms, which can be accessed by all APP treatment providers.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing open communication between APP, PTSU and DPSCS to facilitate successful implementation of the newly developed electronic referral form.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends evaluating whether traditional offender treatment programs are responsive to the unique needs of veterans. The first step in this process will be creating a system to identify the proportion of domestic violence offenders that are military veterans.

## **LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL**

The Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) is a risk assessment survey conducted by police and Sheriff's deputies with a domestic violence victim when they respond to intimate partner violence calls or conduct safety interviews. The LAP was instituted in these cases to determine the risk level of the victim and to facilitate the victim's entry into services. High lethality risk factors such as the defendant's use of a weapon in an assault and threats to kill are documented on the LAP. This year, the Offender Program and Policy Committee



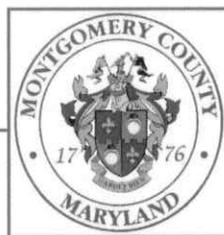
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explored the possibility of LAPs being included in case files for offender programs such as PTSU, Community Supervision, and the AIP. Upon extensive consideration, it was first noted that, unlike law enforcement records, PTSU and Community Supervision records can be subpoenaed. Since the LAP is essentially a victim statement, it may be considered a biased source of information from a legal perspective. Furthermore, if a LAP is referenced in legal proceedings, the offender could hear the contents of the LAP and know how the victim answered the questions, which may place the victim in additional danger.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends that the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services evaluate its protocols for receiving and filing LAPs to ensure that all LAPs are being collected and catalogued for easy access. However, the committee advises against the use of LAPs by PTSU and Community Supervision.

## SUMMARY

Through the services provided by the FJC, the monitoring of domestic violence policy, and the implementation of numerous domestic violence prevention initiatives, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) continues to play an active and critical role in creating a safe community for families to live free of abuse. These activities and programs would not be possible without the support of DVCC agency partners, community groups and the Montgomery County FJC Foundation. In the coming year, the DVCC will continue to promote and expand existing initiatives and services as well as explore new, innovative strategies to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in Montgomery County.



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL

### ANNUAL REPORT 2012