Through the Eyes of a Child: Understanding Children’s Experiences in CT Domestic Violence Shelters

Last year NEARLY 70% of the more than 1,000 CHILDREN who stayed in Connecticut’s domestic violence shelters were 6 YEARS OLD OR YOUNGER. Improving outcomes for these children and building their resiliency so they may thrive following exposure to domestic violence is explored in CCADV’s new report, **Through the Eyes of a Child: Understanding Children’s Experiences in Connecticut Domestic Violence Shelters**.

The report highlights the experiences of children in shelter, from their own perspective, and how shelter environments can be best positioned to meet their needs. Children staying in shelter were provided with disposable cameras allowing them to chronicle their stay in a scrapbook. Emerging themes from the scrapbooks include hope, community, advantages and difficulties of communal living and the importance of play as a therapeutic tool. Interwoven was the consistent portrayal of feeling safe and secure, with many children photographing alarm systems and discussing their relationships with the shelter’s child advocate.

A crucial component of building resiliency in children is the presence of a positive, caring, and protective adult, even if for a brief period. This highlights the important role of advocates who specialize in the needs of children within each domestic violence shelter and the significance of strengthening the child/non-offending parent relationship through advanced systemic advocacy and capacity building. CCADV actively seeks opportunities to increase access to trauma-informed, evidence-based intervention tools for its advocates and will make further efforts to incorporate guidance from early childhood and education institutions into best practice models that holistically support children and families.

Concerning the physical setting of the shelter, it is essential to create child-friendly, strength-based environments that build an atmosphere of safety and trust in which children and adults are able to make better decisions, regulate their emotions and provide important emotional support to each other. Building and maintaining these spaces, particularly given the normal wear and tear that communal living places on household objects, is not without its challenges. CCADV will continue to support its members to ensure that children living in member residential facilities are provided with the fullest possible range of age-appropriate, trauma-informed care and that all options are identified to adequately maintain these facilities.
CCADV Updates Tools for Law Enforcement

CCADV recently printed 1,500 safety plan tear-off pads that will be distributed to law enforcement agencies across the state. The pads enable officers to provide all victims of domestic violence with a sheet of tips on staying safe following an incident and the direct 24/7 hotline number of the local domestic violence organization. It is a simple tool to ensure that victims can easily access the support of their local domestic violence provider.

CCADV also redesigned and ordered a new batch of our Family Violence Incident Checklist for law enforcement. This document, which is intended to be placed in the visor of police vehicles, includes a number of reporting and arrest documentation steps, as well as important notification information for law enforcement to share with victims, including the contact information for the local CCADV member organization.

Any police departments that are in need of a new set of printed materials should contact CCADV Director of Law Enforcement Services, Butch Hyatt at whyatt@ctcadv.org or 860.282.7899.

CCADV Training Institute

Don’t miss out on these exciting opportunities through CCADV’s Training Institute! Click on the titles below for a description and registration information.

Community Welcome
QPR Suicide Prevention
February 15 I 10:00am - 1:00pm I CCADV

How to Prepare a Winning Grant Proposal
February 22 I 10:00am - 1:00pm I CCADV

Trauma-Informed Recommendations for Working with Children Exposed to Domestic Violence
March 7 I 9:30am - 1:00pm I CCADV

Community Mapping: Meeting the Needs of All We Serve
April 19 I 10:00am - 1:00pm I CCADV

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence
April 20 I 10:00am - 1:00pm I CCADV

Members, School-based & Youth-serving Professionals
Safe Dates
April 11 I 9:00am - 3:00pm I CCADV

Members Only

New Staff & Volunteer Orientation
Feb. 27 - Mar. 2 I 9:30am - 4:00pm I CCADV

Principles of Primary Prevention
March 15 I 10:00am - 1:00pm I CCADV

Day of Advocacy Staples
March 16 I 9:30am - 4:00pm I CCADV

Law Enforcement
Strangulation
March 10 I 8:00am - 4:00pm I POSTC, Meriden
Law Enforcement, CSSD Personnel Only

Mental Health First Aid for Law Enforcement
April 18 I 8:30am - 4:30pm I CCADV
Law Enforcement Only
February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM) and the perfect time to share CCADV’s mobile app, td411, with the teens in your life! Dating as a teenager can be a lot of fun, but it can also be very complicated. Relationships, whether they are between two adults or two teenagers, exist on a spectrum, from healthy to unhealthy to abusive. The most important thing to remember is that love should never hurt, either physically or emotionally, and that everyone has the right to feel safe and good about themselves.

It’s critical that teens have access to information about healthy dating behaviors and warning signs that their relationship might be abusive. Our mobile app, td411, does just that. td411 provides essential information to teens in a manner that makes sense for them - through their phone or mobile device. The app answers questions that they may be too afraid to ask and includes interactive tools to help them learn about their relationship and to connect with a counselor if they need someone to talk to.

d411 lets you...

• Learn healthy behaviors for dating relationships and the signs of abusive behaviors
• Take the Dating Quiz to see where your relationship falls
• Check out important safety tips and ways that you can stay safe
• Use the search function to find the nearest counselor
• Contenido ahora también disponible en español (content now also available in Spanish)

DO YOU WORK WITH TEENS?
CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A FLYER ON td411. POST IT AND SPREAD THE WORD!

2017 TDVAM

Like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter and share our 2017 TDVAM social media campaign!
**CCADV Releases 2015 - 2016 Annual Report**

CCADV has released its 2015 – 2016 Annual Report: Collective Impact. The staff and board of CCADV, along with our 18 member organizations, have worked collectively to examine the existing needs of those we serve, identify strengths and challenges within our current system, and determine how we can best align resources to meet the complex needs of all victims.

A key element of this work has been a statewide needs assessment that provides CCADV and our partners with critical information on domestic violence service provision in Connecticut that identifies trends and emerging needs. Data gathered from the needs assessment shows that Connecticut domestic violence shelters are today consistently exceeding capacity at 125% compared to running at just 57% capacity in 2008. A significant driver of this increase is the length of time victims are staying in shelter – 37 days in 2013 compared to 26 days in 2008 (the time period captured by needs assessment), with 2016 updates demonstrating a 46 day average length of stay for victims.

Of the **39,661 victims** served in fiscal year 2016, **1 in 17 victims** was housed in **emergency shelter**.

Meeting the emergency housing needs of victims continues to be a challenge.

**Shelter utilization increased 119% over the past 8 years.**

**Average length of stay in emergency shelter**

**46 days**, up 77% in 8 years.

Why are victims staying longer? They are presenting with more **acute, complex needs** that often inhibit their ability to transition from shelter to safe living arrangements in a time manner.

**Victims experience financial abuse that often inhibits their ability to support themselves and is exacerbated by a lack of affordable housing.**

**High-risk pregnancies and other serious medical conditions, such as cancer, require additional supports and limit timely transitions.**

**Reduced community services for mental health and substance abuse results in fewer recovery options and longer shelter stays.**

The data gathered as part of the statewide needs assessment will inform our strategic planning efforts to ensure responsive, deliberate approaches to serving victims. We plan to maximize unique and aligned relationships that positively impact our core competencies around technical assistance, education and policy development. We also aim to identify and pursue opportunities that strengthen our organization infrastructure and offer quality responses for victims in the most cost-effective manner.
Additional highlights from the annual report include...

**PUBLIC AWARENESS**

**GOAL:** Broaden public awareness about the availability of the statewide English and Spanish domestic violence hotlines to improve access to confidential, safe and free services.

We developed **2 NEW PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS** in **English** and **Spanish** that ran **STATEWIDE**

**MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN**

**GOAL:** Train organizations and professionals that come into contact with children exposed to family violence on best practices to meet the needs of these children in a trauma-informed manner that fully supports the non-offending parent to nurture and protect that child.

During fiscal years 2015 & 2016 we trained more than **800 PROFESSIONALS** including **CHILD PROTECTION, HEAD START, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS, GALS, SOCIAL WORKERS, AND HOME VISITORS** through various speaking engagements at partner events, trainings and meetings on topics including **BUILDING RESILIENCY, SUPPORTIVE FACTORS & TOOLS, AND IMPROVING OUTCOMES.**

**HEALTH PROFESSIONAL OUTREACH**

In FY 2016 CCADV launched a **Health Professional Outreach Project (HPO)**, which provides training and technical assistance related to intimate partner violence (IPV) to healthcare providers across Connecticut.

**GOAL:** Provide training to improve identification and response to IPV through healthcare screening and increase referrals by health professionals to CCADV member organizations.

We trained **805 HEALTH PROFESSIONALS** across **42 PRESENTATIONS**

**REFERRALS** from health professionals increased by **184%** over the previous year. (166 in FY15 vs. 471 in FY16)

**td411**

**GOAL:** Engage youth in a relevant manner to discuss teen dating violence and provide a safe way for them to get information and help.

In February 2015 we re-launched our teen dating violence awareness mobile app, **td411**. Since then, nearly **500 INDIVIDUALS** have downloaded the re-designed app and over **6,300 PRINTED MATERIALS** regarding the app have been distributed.

**LETHALITY ASSESSMENT**

**GOAL:** Engage between 45 and 55 additional law enforcement agencies to participate in our innovative partnership with law enforcement through CT’s **Lethality Assessment Program (LAP).**

We engaged **51 ADDITIONAL POLICE AGENCIES** in LAP during fiscal years 2015 & 2016, bringing the total to **86 AGENCIES** or **91% OF CT CITIES & TOWNS** utilizing LAP since its inception in 2012.
CCADV Outlines 2017 Policy Priorities

The 2017 session of the Connecticut General Assembly is underway and will conclude on June 7, 2017. CCADV has released its priorities for the session including:

**RESPOND TO THE FREQUENCY OF STALKING**

Broaden Connecticut’s definition of stalking to address national best practices that improve the ability of law enforcement to intervene in stalking behaviors earlier and protect victims from escalating violence. A known risk factor for fatal family violence, many states have revised their statutory definitions to allow for a lower level fear element when charging for stalking.

Many stalking behaviors, such as repeated telephone calls and sending unwanted gifts, might not result in a victim having a “fear for such person’s physical safety,” as is currently required by Connecticut law, but would certainly cause the victim “substantial emotional distress” and impact their ability to enjoy daily life.

CCADV will work to add “suffer substantial emotional distress” to Connecticut’s stalking law and to define “reasonable person” as a “reasonable person in the victim’s circumstance.” Better defining “reasonable person” highlights the importance of understanding context and the victim’s previous experiences with the perpetrator when evaluating a stalking case.

29 OTHER STATES UTILIZE A LOWER LEVEL FEAR ELEMENT. CT’S LAW SHOULD GIVE POLICE THE ABILITY TO INTERVENE IN STALKING BEHAVIORS EARLY.

**ADDRESS THE SERIOUSNESS OF SUFOCATION**

Expand the definition of strangulation to include acts of suffocation. Connecticut does not have a crime of “suffocation,” so those crimes are often treated as assaults. Suffocation involves impeding a person’s ability to breathe, similar to strangulation, with the same potentially devastating health effects from a deprivation of oxygen to the brain. Acts of strangulation and the associated long-term consequences have received heightened awareness within the criminal justice system. Addressing suffocation with the same vigilance is a common sense step towards enhancing victim safety and offender accountability.

**WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US ABOUT STALKING IN CT?**

Connecticut’s Lethality Assessment Program screen is an evidence-based tool used by law enforcement at the scene of an intimate partner violence incident to assess the victim’s risk for fatal violence.

According to nearly 3,000 victim responses since its inception in October 2012...

71% had their DAILY ACTIVITIES CONTROLLED and
49% were FOLLOWED/SPIED ON or SUBJECT TO THREATENING MESSAGES

46% were THREATENED TO BE KILLED

Looking at CT’s arrest data for stalking in intimate partner relationships, there were...

71 ARRESTS in 2015 and
89 ARRESTS in 2014

**PROTECT VICTIMS’ ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND ENSURE THAT FEDERAL HEALTHCARE BENEFITS FOR VICTIMS ARE ACCESSIBLE THROUGH CT’S HEALTHCARE EXCHANGE**

Healthcare is a critical component of addressing domestic violence and is a focus of CCADV’s work through our Health Professional Outreach Project. Potential lack of access to healthcare coverage is often an obstacle for victims, particularly victims with children, when considering leaving an abuser. Ensuring that victims have access to healthcare and that health professionals have the necessary intervention tools will help address this serious public health problem. CCADV will work to mirror federally-facilitated plan benefits that make domestic violence a qualifying life event for special enrollment eligibility and work with CT’s Healthcare Exchange Board to ensure that Connecticut’s base state-facilitated healthcare plan includes domestic violence screening as an explicitly defined benefit.


**PROTECT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT FUNDING**

Earlier this month national news reports indicated that the new Federal Administration is considering eliminating grants under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA was passed with bipartisan support to improve the law enforcement response to violence against women and create specialized victim services. VAWA has been incredibly effective in saving lives and money. Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence rely on federally-funded direct services such as shelter, rape crisis services, legal assistance, direct counseling, and more.

Click here for a complete list of VAWA-funded grant programs, many of which support victim right here in Connecticut.

The National Network to End Domestic Violence has established an action alert that you can use to make your voice heard in Washington, DC...

**WHAT WILL AN INCREASED SURCHARGE MEAN FOR VICTIM SERVICES?**

With a consistent average of 19,000 weddings in CT each year, the MLS currently generates an average of $361,000 annually. Under our proposal, it could generate closer to $931,000 annually to support services and mitigate state funding reductions in recent years.

**INCREASE CONNECTICUT’S MARRIAGE LICENSE SURCHARGE**

Working collaboratively with CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence, CCADV will seek to have the state's Marriage License Surcharge (MLS) increased to support domestic and sexual violence services. Connecticut's MLS is currently $20 and under our proposal would rise to $50. Since its inception in 1992, the MLS has not increased, with $1 retained by the municipality and $19 deposited to the Departments of Social Services and Public Health to support domestic and sexual violence services.

Funding will help support critical support services for victims, such as:

- Statewide crisis hotlines
- Short- and long-term counseling
- Victim accompaniment in hospital and police settings
- Maintain and improve shelter infrastructure
- Victim transportation costs

**HELP STOP “CONVERSION THERAPY” SUPPORT HB 6695**

CCADV is a member of CT Equality, a coalition leading the fight for equality and justice for LGBTQ people in Connecticut. This year the coalition is working with State Representative Jeff Curry (D-East Hartford) and State Senator Beth Bye (D-West Hartford) on a bill that would make it impermissible for licensed professionals in Connecticut working with minors to engage in so-called “conversion therapy”.

The term “conversion therapy” refers to a range of dangerous and discredited practices that seek to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. The nation’s top leading medical, mental health, and human services professional organizations do not recognize conversion therapy as a legitimate therapy and have condemned the practice. This includes the American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association and the National Association of Social Workers, among others.

If you have questions or would like more information about any of the policy initiatives discussed, please contact:

Liza Andrews, Director of Public Policy & Communications
landrews@ctcadv.org | 860.282.7899

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**CCADV OUTLINES 2017 POLICY PRIORITIES**

**TELL CONGRESS TO PROTECT VAWA FUNDING!**

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**WHAT ARE OTHER STATES DOING?**

While most states assess surcharges by counties, some of CT’s neighboring states have increased their state-wide surcharges to better support services, including:

- New Hampshire - $50 surcharge
- Vermont - $60 surcharge

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**NEW HAMPSHIRE - $50 surcharge**

**VERMONT - $60 surcharge**

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Liza Andrews, Director of Public Policy & Communications
landrews@ctcadv.org | 860.282.7899
Connecticut’s Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards in Effect

Connecticut’s Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards were established pursuant to Public Act 15-211 and took effect on July 1, 2016. The new program standards are intended to provide a framework and establish consistency among offender services, ensuring that programs emphasize the accountability of individual offenders. They ensure that current best practices utilized by Judicial Branch-contracted service providers are part of the community-based programs accessed by some offenders. The standards represent an important opportunity to improve an offender’s skills to support a non-violent lifestyle and engage in healthy relationships, which will increase overall safety for victims.

The standards are overseen by the Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards Advisory Council (“Council”), which is co-chaired by CCADV’s CEO, Karen Jarmoc, and Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) Deputy Director I, Joseph DiTunno. As a result of the development of program standards, the Council will maintain a list of approved providers that attest to compliance with the standards. Only those individuals or agencies that are on the list can be utilized by defendants that are charged with a family violence offense as a part of resolving the pending criminal case.

Developed by the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission, the standards are specific to programming for male offenders who have been arrested for committing violence against a current or former intimate partner (e.g., spouse, dating partner, person with whom they have a child in common) of the opposite sex. There is little research or best practice models for effective, validated programs for intimate partner violence by female and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ) offenders. Prior to the adoption of these standards, Connecticut was one (1) of only six (6) states without formal program standards.

The standards address program content ensuring that programs define and discuss all forms of domestic violence and associated dynamics, including attitudes and beliefs that support controlling, abusive behavior, while emphasizing the importance of taking responsibility for one’s actions. They also call for prohibiting the use of anger management techniques that attribute anger or stress as the primary cause of abuse, rather than the desire to maintain power and control over an intimate partner.

For family violence cases initiated on or after July 1, 2016 that are not referred to the CSSD Family Violence Intervention Unit, prosecutors must state in open court when entering a nolle that the defendant has received counseling or treatment that complies with the standards if the reason for the nolle includes the defendant’s participation in a counseling or treatment program.

CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE CT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDER PROGRAM STANDARDS

LISTS OF APPROVED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDER PROGRAMS

Click below to access the approved list of agency and individual providers. These lists are maintained at www.ctcadv.org and will be updated as additional providers are approved.

Approved List of Providers - Agency
(Last updated 11.18.16)

Approved List of Providers - Individual
(Last updated 11.18.16)

LOOKING TO BECOME AN APPROVED PROVIDER?

Agencies and individual counselors seeking to be on the Council’s list of approved Domestic Violence Offender Program Providers must complete a provider application and agreement, attesting to program compliance with the standards. Click below to access applicable forms.

Provider Agreement
Provider Application - Agency
Provider Application - Individual

Notarized applications should be mailed to:
CCADV
912 Silas Deane Highway, Lower Level
Wethersfield, CT 06109

Training on the program standards is available for organizations dependent on group size. For questions or to schedule a training, please contact:

Dan Cargill, Director of Legal Advocacy
dcargill@ctcadv.org | 860.282.7899
Save the Date
Spring Reception
to Benefit CCADV
Tuesday, May 23, 2017
5:30pm - 7:00pm
Governor’s Residence
990 Prospect Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105

New Horizons is a 24-hour operational non-profit organization that provides services to victims of domestic violence in Middlesex County. These services include emergency shelter for victims and children, community education, support groups, individual counseling, court advocacy, and a 24/7 confidential hotline.

Please support CCADV member organization, New Horizons, at their upcoming art show to benefit domestic violence services!
MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services
Ansonia       New Haven
(203) 736-9944       (203) 789-8104
www.bhcare.org

Women’s Center of Greater Danbury
Danbury
(203) 731-5206
www.wcogd.org

The Network
Enfield
(860) 763-4542
www.thenetworkct.org

Interval House
Hartford
(860) 527-0550
www.intervalhousect.org

New Horizons
Middletown
(860) 347-3044
www.newhorizonsdv.com

Safe Futures
New London
(860) 701-6000
www.safefuturesct.org

Women’s Support Services
Sharon
(860) 364-1900
www.wssdv.org

Safe Haven
Waterbury
(203) 575-0036
www.safehavengw.org

The Center for Family Justice
Bridgeport
(203) 384-9559
www.centerforfamilyjustice.org

Domestic Violence Program/
United Services, Inc.
Dayville       Willimantic
(860) 774-8648      (860) 456-9476
www.unitedservicesct.org

Domestic Abuse Service/
Greenwich YWCA
Greenwich
(203) 622-0003
www.ywcagreenwich.org

Chrysalis Domestic Violence Services
Meriden
(203) 238-1501
www.mwchrysalis.org

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain
(860) 225-6357
www.prudencecrandall.org

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk       Stamford
(203) 852-1980      (203) 588-9096
www.dvccct.org

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington
(860) 482-7133
www.sbaproject.org

CCADV is the state’s leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those agencies that serve them.