Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) Reaches Tipping Point

Broadening the state’s ability to protect victims of domestic violence at an incredibly dangerous time, more and more of Connecticut’s law enforcement agencies are utilizing a nationally-recognized risk assessment tool when responding to these calls. As of June 1, 2015, the Lethality Assessment Program is being utilized by over 50% of Connecticut’s law enforcement agencies.

Overseen by CCADV, the Lethality Assessment Program is an innovative partnership between law enforcement and domestic violence agencies. Officers responding to calls for domestic violence use an evidence-based screening tool to quickly assess those victims at the highest risk for increased or fatal violence. First introduced in Connecticut in 2010 by the Ansonia Police Department, the program began rolling out statewide in October 2012 following a successful grant application by CCADV and the Connecticut Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC).

“This screening tool saves lives and we deeply appreciate the tremendous impact that so many police departments are making by implementing this national model here in Connecticut to improve outcomes for victims,” said Karen Jarmoc, chief executive officer, CCADV. “The Lethality Assessment Program allows for a more coordinated and cooperative response to domestic violence that has enhanced engagement of victims in available services.”

Currently, 63 out of Connecticut’s 115 law enforcement agencies are participating in the program, serving victims in 80% of Connecticut’s towns and cities. This includes 7 out of the state’s 10 largest cities (Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, Norwalk, Danbury, West Hartford, Greenwich). The CT State Police, which serves 81 Connecticut municipalities, and State Environmental Conservation Police are also participating. Click here and scroll down for a complete list of departments.

Police departments participating in the program send one officer or other personnel to attend a 5 hour training session related to domestic violence and administration of the screening tool. Trained officers can then return to their departments to train other officers, often in as little as 30 minutes through roll call. Once on the scene of a domestic violence call, officers can assess a victim’s risk for serious injury or death by asking questions about current or previous use of weapons, threats and acts of violence, among other indicators.

Contined on page 2...
LAP Update Cont’d

Officers immediately connect “high risk” victims to their local domestic violence organization with the goal of quickly linking the victim to available services. Each participating police department maintains an ongoing relationship with the local domestic violence organization to ensure effective communication.

The program has also been adopted by several of Connecticut’s institutions of higher education, including UConn, Southern CT State University, Western CT State University and Eastern CT State University. Both state casino police departments have participated in trainings, with the Mashantucket Tribal Police Department anticipated to officially begin the program on July 1st.

Police departments interested in learning more or attending an upcoming training should contact:

Joseph Froehlich
Director of Law Enforcement Services
860.282.7899
jfroehlich@ctcadv.org.

Call for Nominations! Do you know a person from your community or profession who goes above and beyond when helping victims and their families? Perhaps a law enforcement officer, educator, medical practitioner, attorney or faith-based leader. We want to hear their story and learn about their work to help individuals experiencing domestic violence. Click HERE for more information and to make your nominations!

SAVE THE DATE

5th Annual Breakfast & Awards Ceremony

Friday, November 6, 2015
7:30am - 9:00am
Hartford Marriott Downtown

Please save the date and plan to join us as we recognize the 2015 Class of statewide leaders who are working to improve conditions for victims of domestic violence and their families in Connecticut. In our fifth year we are pleased to announce that CCADV will begin to recognize the meaningful efforts of both MEN AND WOMEN across our great state who are boldly stepping forward to advance policy and practice around serving victims of domestic violence. As the state’s leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them we fully recognize that we cannot make progress alone. It truly is the work of so many that embolden our opportunity to help people at their most vulnerable time.
CCADV Awarded Grant to Strengthen Services for Children

CCADV was recently awarded a grant from the Connecticut Health & Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA), all of which will be passed on to the membership. The grant will be used to provide families and children exposed to domestic violence a safe nurturing environment with age appropriate and trauma-informed curricula and services, a comfortable space for children to receive these services, and adequate children’s services for families by a trauma-informed advocate while they receive services.

There are three specific goals to be met in this project. The first goal is to **expand the services for children of parents enrolled or utilizing the services provided by CCADV’s 18 member organizations and to increase the resources provided to children and parents while attending services.** Children’s services are provided by certified domestic violence counselors in a structured environment and is made available during hours when counseling and/or group sessions are provided to adult victims and as needed on evenings and/or weekends. Children’s services are an important component to overall service provision as it allows staff to engage children in therapeutic play opportunities while also providing time for the non-offending parent to meet their own emotional needs. This grant will allow CCADV to train each of the member organizations on the Head Start classroom template, which allows counselors to incorporate various resources that follow the intervention continuum.

Secondly, **CCADV will re-invest in the children’s space at each of our 18 member organizations.** In an atmosphere of safety and trust, children and adults are able to make better decisions, regulate their emotions, and provide important emotional support to each other. Emergency shelter provides services to over 2,000 adults and children annually, which makes wear and tear a significant problem. Grant funds will be used to invest in furniture, psycho-educational tools, curriculums, books, games, arts & crafts, and a computer for each location with proper software and various age appropriate games. Each space will have tools that incorporate social and emotional development such as water/sand tables, puppets, and dolls. Children will have the opportunity to learn how to become both comfortable and express their feelings through creativity and appropriate emotional outlets.

Finally, **CCADV plans to expand on the trauma-informed curriculum already implemented by our member organization child advocates.** CCADV has previously collaborated with Connecticut’s Head Start Collaborative to develop and advance best practices for children who experience trauma and homelessness. As a result, CCADV member organization child advocates began working with the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) to identify the social and emotional development needs of children. The DECA tool provides advocates the opportunity to engage the non-offending parent on issues and concerns for their child’s development, trauma and safety. A key aspect of DECA is how risk factors are identified and labeled as areas of concern. The language used is trauma-informed and children are not put at risk for an inappropriate label based on a time limited intervention. To further DECA’s applicability to our service structure, CCADV contracted with Devereux to create specific intervention activities that could be completed by any certified domestic violence counselor to enhance and support the parent–child relationship. This grant will allow CCADV to provide its 18 members with additional training on DECA including training kits that ensure children are receiving an age appropriate and trauma-informed curriculum whether services are provided in a shelter or the community setting.

CCADV Director of Member Organization Services, Kelly Annelli, will oversee and evaluate this program.

CCADV on Univision

CCADV often partners with Connecticut’s local Univision affiliate to strengthen engagement with the Spanish-speaking community. Please watch our latest interview with CCADV Director of Diversity and Accessibility, Wendy Mota Kasongo. Wendy discusses the many services provided CCADV’s 18 member organizations, including court advocacy, emergency shelter, counseling and child advocacy. She also discusses bystander intervention tips and trainings available to the public through CCADV’s Training Institute.

Please note that this interview was conducted entirely in Spanish. Esta entrevista fue conducida en español.
Member Spotlight On...

SustainAbilityCT (iACT)

by Katharine Lake, DVCC Media Advocate

While any number of barriers may discourage a victim from leaving an abusive partner, survivors frequently identify financial issues as a primary stumbling block. A 2012 survey sponsored by Mary Kay, Inc. found that 74% of survivors stayed in abusive relationships for longer than they wanted to because of financial concerns. According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence’s (NNEDV) 2013 census of DV service providers, 95% of unmet requests for services in CT were housing-related. In fact, housing advocacy and financial assistance were the most frequently requested non-residential services that could not be provided, due to factors such as lack of staff, funding, and/or organizational capacity. These statistics serve to highlight what we know to be true from experience: securing safe and permanent housing and becoming economically secure remain two of the largest practical obstacles victims of domestic violence face in leaving an abusive relationship. This is particularly true for victims who reside within the Domestic Violence Crisis Center’s (DVCC) catchment area, where the cost of living is remarkably high and truly affordable housing nearly nonexistent.

Too often, victims are denied both financial resources and the means to become financially independent. An abuser may bar access to family income, require justification for all money spent, forbid the victim to work or pursue educational or training opportunities, sabotage the victim’s employment, hide assets, run up debt in the victim’s name, and damage or ruin the victim’s credit history.

Recognizing that economic stability may be the most important predictor of an individual’s ability to permanently exit the abusive relationship, DVCC has long endeavored to address the economic, education and housing hurdles our clients confront. For example, over the past several years, the agency has worked systemically to improve access to affordable housing. The process confirmed what we already knew; that long-term success is dependent upon a survivor’s ability to become financially savvy, self-confident and “in control”. This May, DVCC unveiled SustainAbilityCT, a program focusing on economic solutions that drive employment, education and housing – the building blocks for a sustainable future. Also known, in shortened form, as iACT, SustainAbilityCT’s tag line is “Women in charge of change”. Our goal is for clients to develop strategies for addressing the complex financial and safety challenges of ending a relationship with an abusive partner, and obtain the information and skills necessary to achieve self-determination.

Efforts to implement this program have been intensive and deliberate. The SustainAbilityCT Coordinator researched ideas and best practices modeled in existing economic empowerment programs, and gathered information from experts at domestic violence coalitions in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Illinois and Wisconsin, as well as the National Network to End Domestic Violence. iACT is also receiving technical assistance from the Economic Security for Survivors Project, a Washington DC non-profit, in creating a course on economic security and employment tailored specifically to our region.

The program plays a key role in the agency’s commitment to a “Continuum of Care,” interacting with all platforms and departments. Advocates work one-on-one with clients to address barriers to self-sufficiency, and clients are also provided access to regular consumer education workshops, ESL and computer classes, and the “Money Talks” workshops series covering fundamentals like Budgeting, Credit Basics, and Financial Safety Planning. Because income and employment are key to maintaining long-term stability, clients are also assisted with resume preparation and interview skills, direct connection to practical job training programs, and job search strategies. Future plans for iACT include individual development accounts for clients who complete the consumer education program and identify a specific savings goal; and partnerships that will foster job training and placement in skilled, professional positions.

Continued next page...
Given the innovative and ambitious nature of this project, we are asking for a lot of client feedback along the way. As the program’s coordinator, Danielle Brown, says, “We are constantly tweaking, redefining and adjusting in order to be more effective.”

Initiating this program has also prompted DVCC to look at better ways of tracking our clients’ progress in order to determine the effectiveness of our interventions – what works, what doesn’t, and how can we do it better. Even so, as Brown observed, outcomes aren’t always tangible, especially at first. “We also have to look for changes in behavior,” she said. “Did the client show that she learned something new, was she able to create a budget, is she trying to use the tools we give her to take charge of her finances, is she actively looking for a job? We may not see the actual outcomes immediately, but if she is learning and then acting on that knowledge, that is a huge step.”

So far, the reaction from clients has been extremely positive. Over the past year, more than 200 clients have engaged in SustainAbilityCT services, with concerns ranging from repairing ruined credit, to finding employment, to accessing safe and affordable housing. As one client said after working with SustainAbilityCT, “I am no longer scared and am ready to take control of managing my money and debts.”

For questions or additional information, please contact program coordinator, Danielle Brown, or DVCC Executive Director, Rachelle Kucera Mehra, at 203.588.9100.

**Member Spotlight cont’d...**

In May, CCADV hosted a community gathering - Domestic Violence in Middle-Eastern & Asian Communities: What Everyone Should Know. The event brought together experts across various disciplines to discuss their organization’s role in reaching victims of domestic violence of Asian and Middle-Eastern backgrounds. In the keynote address, Dr. Marianne Yoshioka, dean of the Smith College School of Social Work, emphasized the need for culturally relevant interventions when meeting the needs of victims from underserved populations. She specifically reiterated the importance of considering culture for Asian victims and articulated some of the common cultural characteristics that influence help-seeking behaviors.

Following the keynote address, representatives from five state and community based organizations led attendees in a panel discussion. Panelists included: Mui-Mui Hin-McCormick, Executive Director, Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission; Malavika Vidwans, Board President, Sneha, Inc.; Lara Thompson, Executive Director, Milla Project, Inc.; Shahana Malik, President, Maika Inc.; and, Mari Merwin, Lead Clinician, Asian Family Services.

Panelists shared with the audience information on their organization, culture specific services and program strengths and challenges. Participants reported a significant increase in knowledge regarding how to serve victims from Asian and Middle-Eastern communities as well as increased awareness on outreach strategies and local resources. In all, the event was a great success and presented CCADV with the opportunity to continue the important work of building capacity and engaging under-served communities in Connecticut.
The 2015 session of the CT General Assembly came to a close on June 3rd. CCADV saw several legislative victories this session, but is disappointed that legislators left work around some important protections for victims of domestic violence unfinished.

**NEW LAWS PROTECTING VICTIMS**

**Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards**

Public Act 15-211 established Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards and an advisory council to oversee the standards. Prior to the passage of this act, Connecticut was one of only six states that did not have standards for court-ordered programs for domestic violence offenders. The standards are intended to serve as a framework for new and existing program providers to develop and deliver services to people arrested for committing crimes of violence against an intimate partner or former intimate partner or people identified as needing services in order to prevent acts of domestic violence. Emphasizing the importance of taking responsibility for one’s actions, programs must seek to change an individual’s abusive behavior by teaching interpersonal strategies that support a nonviolent lifestyle and promote healthy relationships. The standards also call for prohibiting the use of anger management techniques that attribute anger or stress as the primary cause of abuse.

The new standards go into effect for all Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division-funded programs on January 1, 2016. All non-state-funded programs that prosecutors allow offenders to use must also comply with the standards by July 1, 2016. The advisory council, which will be co-chaired by CCADV and the Court Support Services Division, will meet annually to review and, as necessary, amend the program standards.

**Victim Confidentiality**

Public Act 15-211 also created important protections for victim confidentiality. The new law requires that the name and addresses of victims of family violence be kept confidential throughout involvement in the criminal justice system in the same manner that information about victims of sexual violence have been kept confidential since 1981. Seeking assistance for family violence can be a very difficult step for many victims, particularly when it involves the criminal justice system. Some victims have noted that at least part of their hesitation is based on the knowledge that their name in all likelihood will appear in local media, either through a police blotter or the local news. This new protection, which went into effect on July 1st, means that victims will no longer have to make a decision to seek police assistance based on a fear that they dynamics of their relationship will be shared with everyone in their local community.

**Children Exposed to Family Violence**

Special Act 15-10 established a new legislative task force to study the statewide response to children exposed to family violence. The task force will examine existing policies and procedures used by several organizations and professionals that may come into contact with children exposed to family violence (e.g., DCF, law enforcement, guardians ad litem, healthcare professionals, the Judicial Branch, etc.). It also calls for the creation of a statewide model policy for responding to children exposed to family violence.

On July 15th, Senate President Martin Looney named CCADV president & CEO, Karen Jarmoc, co-chair of the task force. House Speaker Brendan Sharkey named Garry Lapidus, director of the Injury Prevention Center at CT Children’s Medical Center/Hartford Hospital, to the other co-chair position. The first meeting of the task force will be held at the Legislative Office Building on July 30th, with findings and recommendations due to the General Assembly by January 15, 2016.
MORE WORK TO BE DONE…

Protecting Victims at the Most Dangerous Time

CCADV is disappointed that the full legislature did not take a vote on either of the two bills that would have protected victims of domestic violence at the most dangerous time. Both Senate Bill 650, championed by Senator Martin Looney (D-New Haven) and Senator Mae Flexer (D-Killingly), and House Bill 6848, championed by Governor Dannel P. Malloy, would have required domestic violence offenders who are subject to temporary restraining orders to temporarily surrender their firearms for the 2 week period covered by the temporary order. Senate Bill 650 would also have strengthened service of restraining orders by increasing the amount of time allowed to make service; providing for an automatic extension of a temporary restraining to allow additional time to make service; and, enhancing the state's ability to collect data about service of orders.

While an amendment to SB 650 with the firearm removal language was favorably voted on in the Senate (19-17), neither of the full bills were able to be called for a vote in either the Senate or House. We are disappointed that need to protect victims at an extremely dangerous time – when they are attempting to end an abusive relationship – was lost in a debate about gun control. It is important to note that at least 20 other states give the courts some authority to remove firearms from some or all individuals who are subject to temporary, ex parte restraining orders.

However, we are pleased that our coalition and supporters advanced the conversation about victim safety and the reality that victims face when attempting to end an abusive relationship and secure protections through the judicial system, leaving legislators well-positioned to continue the debate in a coming session.

Temporary Holds for Certain Family Violence Arrestees

Senate Bill 651 would have required that certain family violence arrestees be held without bail for 12 hours when the following risk factors were present at the time of their arrest or anytime preceding their release: 1) the use or threatened use of a deadly weapon by the suspect or a pattern of prior conduct involving the use or threatened use of violence with a firearm against the victim; 2) threats to seriously injure or kill the victim or minor child; or 3) serious physical injuries inflicted upon the victim or minor child. Such a hold would give victims critical time to plan for their safety prior to the release of their abuser.

A compromise for an 8 hour hold was reached with both majority and minority leaders, and the bill unanimously passed the Senate. Unfortunately the measure got caught in a filibuster in the House and could not be called for a vote prior to the end of session. We anticipate the measure being reintroduced during the 2016 session.

Click HERE for a summary of 2015 Legislative Changes Related to Domestic Violence.

CCADV Training Institute

Upcoming Trainings

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

Community Welcome

Entendiendo la Violencia Domestica
Sept. 9 I 10:00am - 3:00pm I CCADV

Voices in Power
Sept. 15 I 9:00am - 3:00pm I CCADV

Universal Health Precautions & Infectious Disease
Oct. 7 I 10:00am - 1:00pm I CCADV

Members Only

Advocate Response After a Domestic Violence
Call to Law Enforcement
Sept. 16 I 10:00am - 1:00pm I CCADV

The Intersection of Domestic Violence & Homelessness
Sept. 22 I 10:00am - 1:00pm I CCADV

Day of Advocacy Staples
Sept. 23 I 9:30am - 4:00pm I CCADV
New Staff Sound Off!

This spring CCADV was joined by two new staff members – Kelly Annelli, Director of Member Organization Services, and Natacha J. Kerelejza, LCSW, Clinical Project Director for Health Professional Outreach. Below, Kelly and Natacha sound off about what drove them to this work.

Kelly Annelli, Director of Member Organization Services

Kelly’s role at CCADV is to provide technical assistance to the member organizations and ensure compliance with program standards. Kelly also oversees CCADV’s work to improve outcomes for children exposed to family violence. She previously served as the director of a childcare facility where she was responsible for program oversight, national accreditation, state licensing, and operational policies related to state and national standards.

What drew you to the field of domestic violence?

After my neighbor was murdered by her husband in front of her three children this past June, I contacted CCADV to seek out what I could do to help children exposed to domestic violence. Having a background in early childhood education and psychology, I thought that I could put it to work in helping make the experiences children have during and after domestic violence situations more trauma and child informed. I was asked to sit on a working group which was developing recommendations for children exposed to domestic violence. My passion for the cause led me to accepting a position at CCADV where I am now fortunate enough to make this passion my career.

What’s a current project or piece of your project that you are particularly excited about?

Currently I am working on a project titled, “Through the Eyes of a Child,” which will allow children to chronicle their stay at a domestic violence shelter. The goal is to alleviate some of the trauma that the children are exposed to in both experiencing domestic violence and entering the shelter – a new, unfamiliar environment. Hoping to better understand shelter life through a child’s perspective, children will be given a disposable camera with which they can photograph anything in the shelter they want. The images will be used in a scrapbook journal with the child’s explanation of the photographs they took. From this we hope to learn the needs of children in shelter along with their likes and dislikes of shelter life and, through their eyes, turn a traumatic experience into the first glimpse of hope that they need and deserve.

What do you hope to accomplish overall during your time at CCADV?

I hope to make myself unemployed. I hope that one day there is no one homeless or hungry. I am aware that I cannot do this alone and am very happy that we have a great membership that does amazing work. Ultimately, I hope together we can accomplish making the world a better place for those exposed to violence no matter who they are.

Natacha J. Kerelejza, LCSW, Clinical Project Director for Health Professional Outreach

Natacha’s role at CCADV is to oversee the Health Professional Outreach project, which seeks to improve the statewide healthcare response to intimate partner violence through education, institutional support, technical assistance and a streamlined process for referrals to CCADV member organizations. Natacha has served as the Peer Services Director, Clinical Supervisor and Intensive Case Manager Team Lead at Value Options, the nation’s largest independent behavioral health and wellness company.

What drew you to the field of domestic violence?

My undergraduate sociology professor Dr. Eisenhandler encouraged her students to not only study the impact of violence in society, but to actively volunteer as part of the change. In 1998, I began as a volunteer at the local women’s shelter and sexual assault crisis services. As this is a personal issue in my life, I was led personally and professionally into the field of anti-violence work.

What’s a current project or piece of your project that you are particularly excited about?

Integrating my experience in the healthcare industry with my advocacy roots is what drew me to this position. The impact of violence on physical and mental health is significant. This project addresses connecting healthcare professionals with the services victim/survivors need to integrate knowledge and support.

What do you hope to accomplish overall during your time at CCADV?

My hope is to support the development of a statewide response to domestic violence in Connecticut’s healthcare industry. Training is the beginning, but creating a network that supports best practice and ongoing partnership will truly support individuals at risk for/or currently experiencing intimate partner violence.
CCADV Trains Education Professionals on Safe Dates

This past spring, CCADV was awarded a contract from the Department of Children and Families to train school personnel on the implementation of Safe Dates. Safe Dates is a ten session, evidence-based curriculum designed to prevent dating violence by helping teens recognize the difference between caring, supportive relationships and controlling, manipulative, or abusive dating relationships. The program strives to raise students’ awareness of the cause and consequences of abusive dating relationships, equip them with the skills and resources to help themselves or friends in abusive dating relationships, and equip them with the skills to develop healthy dating relationships, including positive communication, anger management and conflict resolution. Safe Dates can be used as a dating abuse prevention tool for both male and female middle and high school students.

During the months of May and June CCADV facilitated four trainings for approximately 180 teachers, administrators and education specialists to apply the Safe Dates curriculum in their classrooms during the upcoming school year. Two additional trainings will be held this fall. Interested teachers, school professionals (administrators, coaches, paraprofessionals, etc.) or professionals from youth-serving organizations are encouraged to attend. Visit our website to sign-up!

Teen Dating Violence in Connecticut

According to the CT Department of Public Health 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey...

26% of high school students report being verbally or emotionally abused

33.9% female 19.1% male

9% of high school students report being physically hurt on purpose by a dating partner

10.1% female 7.9% male

11% of high school students report being forced by someone they were dating or “going out with” to do sexual things when they did not want to

15.5% female 7.3% male

Read the full report.
MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

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

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