A Message from our President & CEO

Dear Friends,

For those I have yet to meet, my name is Meghan Scanlon and I am the new CEO of CCADV. I’ve spent much of my time in the first two months on the road getting to know our member organizations, talking to survivors and getting important feedback on how we can improve and grow our organization.

I have to say: with each person I meet, each site or shelter I visit, each conversation I have, I continue to be energized and excited about the work we have to do together.

There is no question that COVID-19 has forced us all out of our comfort zones. From what I have seen around the state, it’s also made our commitment to helping survivors and their families thrive stronger than ever. I want to thank all of you for your hard work and resilience during this unprecedented time.

I’ve got a long to-do list of ideas I have and ideas I’ve gotten from many of you in the first two months. In the coming weeks and months I look forward to working with all of you to move this organization and movement forward. I can’t do this without your continued support and feedback so please keep it coming and know my door is always open!!

Meghan
Here's Meghan (front) getting to know our amazing Safe Connect advocates!
From left - Program Manager, Terry, and advocates Laura, Geetha, Xavier, and Margaret.

CCADV Participates in Training Incoming GALs/AMCs

This summer CCADV again participated in the training for all individuals seeking to become a guardian ad litem (GAL) or an attorney for the minor child (AMC). This year’s training was held virtually in two hour segments over 8 days with over 30 participants. Overall training topics included domestic violence, mental health and addiction, courtroom practice, child development and communicating with children, family dynamics, ethics, and cultural competence.

CCADV’s portion of the training related to domestic violence focused on four main areas: the impact of exposure to intimate partner violence on children, understanding victim trauma and its impact on decision-making, the role of Civil Family Violence Victim Advocates, and tools for considering custody decisions in the context of intimate partner violence. Participants learned about typical methods of control used in an abusive relationship, particularly those that are used post separation and may involve the children.

CCADV staff explored how victims constantly reassess their risk which may become compounded when they come into contact with individuals or systems that are not informed or equipped to assess for domestic violence, increased risks, or address the safety needs of victims and their children. This inevitably impacts their trust of systems and often leaves them feeling powerless. A parent may appear uncooperative, scattered, disconnected or otherwise unable to engage in the court process, negotiations and specific GAL requirements due to the trauma experienced. Tips for handling such situations were discussed with a particular focus on local resources provided by civil family violence victim advocates within CCADV’s 18 member organizations.

Member Spotlight - Safe Futures

Safe Futures is excited to share that we recently facilitated our first week of overnight camp for children exposed to family violence. After a year of anticipation and uncertainty the state’s announcement that overnight camps can operate this summer
was met with joy and excitement from staff and potential campers. Thanks to support from community donors and private grants every child was provided a camp trunk packed with supplies for the week including a sleeping bag, pillow, towels, sunscreen, bug spray and more.

Medical professionals from Mohegan Tribe’s Behavioral Health Services graciously donated their time and expertise to ensure every camper was healthy before boarding the bus to Channel 3 Kid’s Camp. They have over 100 years of experience providing the highest quality recreational and educational programing for participants of all physical, developmental, and economic abilities.

Each day at camp children displayed courage as they challenged themselves to try new things like climbing the 50-foot rock wall or riding a zip line. They showed determination as they worked towards goals such as climbing a little higher than the day before, becoming a stronger swimmer, increasing their reading skills, or creating something new. They exhibited kindness and empathy as they supported their cabin mates through homesickness and encouraged each other not to give up on their goals. Every night around the campfire they spoke of where they saw HOPE, and of the dreams they have for their futures.

Staff that were fortunate enough to participate report that, “being a part of their journey to hope and healing is an experience to treasure, I look forward to seeing them grow through the years of Camp HOPE.” Campers can’t wait to return next year. One parent said, “I can’t even begin to tell you the stories about camp they are telling. Everyone they see gets to learn about Camp HOPE.” If you’re interested in supporting Camp HOPE, please visit Safe Future’s donation page.

Meet CCADV's Newest Safe Connect Advocacy Coordinators

Please meet Safe Connect’s newest advocates who came on board this summer! As you know, we continue to work to strengthen our team of talented bilingual, multi-cultural advocates who can provide 24/7 trauma-informed, victim-centered advocacy. Learn a little about Alexandry, Jessica, and John below…

**Alexandry DeJesus**

My background is in accounting, but over the past 16 years I have gotten to work in some exciting fields, including bail bonds, armed security and the CT Air National Guard. Working in these fields has given me the opportunity to help others make great changes in their lives.

I became interested in working at CCADV as a Safe Connect Advocacy Coordinator because it is another way to help others, which is what I’ve dedicated my career to, as well as an opportunity to keep expanding professionally.

When I’m not helping others, I’m at home resting to build more energy for another productive day ahead!

**Jessica DeMeo**

I have worked in the clinical mental health/social work field for over fifteen years. I have experience working with families & children in crisis and the older-adult population. I have worked in the domestic
violence field including criminal & civil work for the CT Judicial Branch. I have also been a Director of the Senior & Social Services Department for a municipality. I am bi-lingual in American Sign Language and have a master’s degree in clinical mental health.

As a Safe Connect Advocacy Coordinator, we may be the first point of contact for someone that is experiencing domestic violence. Being able to actively listen, reassure and assist survivors is so important. I am happy to know that we contribute to improving the safety for victims experiencing domestic violence and help provide them with options that are best suited for them and their unique situation. I am honored to work for CCADV.

While not at work, I enjoy spending time with my family, the outdoors, traveling and rescue/foster work with animals.

**John Martinez-DeJesus**

I am currently a social work student with a passion for humanity, community, and collaboration. As a student, the population in which I am most interested to learn more about and help is the youth. I have collaborated with agencies such as The Institute for Community Research, Mental Health Connecticut, and Connecticut’s Department of Public Health in efforts to gather data and understand young individual’s barriers and tribulations when it comes to homelessness, mental stability and health equity.

I have been curious about and eager to help domestic violence survivors. Although youth is my passion, I believe there is no hope for the future if we don’t attend to the family raising the child who’s in charge of building a better tomorrow.

Whenever I’m not at school or at work you can find me volunteering at local agencies, participating on a new project or chatting at a community event. Apart from being a social butterfly and a compassionate individual, I am a young leader advocating for the youth and disadvantaged in CT. I hope you’ll find that my charisma, honesty, and enthusiasm make collaborating with me a piece of pie.

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**Save the Date! Purple Thursday 10.21.21**
Mark your calendars!

This year, Purple Thursday will be recognized on Thursday, October 21st. Purple Thursday is a national day of action as part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. **Wearing purple** is a simple, yet meaningful way to show your commitment to raising awareness about domestic violence and promoting healthy relationships. Telling people why you’re wearing purple gives you the opportunity to have a conversation about domestic violence and you never know whose life you can change with a simple conversation.

This is a great event to get your friends, family and co-workers to join! Take pictures of everyone wearing purple and post them on social media to help spread the word. **Click here to download and share the flyer.**

Be sure to tag CCADV and use #PurpleThursday!

Facebook: @CTCoalitionAgainstDomesticViolence
Twitter: @CTCADV
Instagram: @CTCADV
Local Volunteer & Donation Guide

Help Support CT's Domestic Violence Service System!

Ever wonder how you can get involved and help have an impact on the lives of survivors and their children? CCADV’s 18 member organizations provide critical direct services across Connecticut including counseling, court advocacy, support groups, child advocacy, safety planning, assistance obtaining basic needs, community education, emergency shelter, and transitional housing options, among others. All of these services are confidential, safe and free of charge, which is something they can’t achieve without the help of someone like you!

We’ve developed a Local Volunteer & Donation Guide that outlines how you can support Connecticut’s domestic violence service system. You may choose to donate financially, either through cash donations, legacy giving, or purchasing essential items needed by survivors. Or you may choose to give of your time through volunteerism. Either way, your time or financial support has a tremendous impact on services and our members’ ability to meet the needs of survivors and their children.

We hope that you find this guide useful and will be able to support your local CCADV member organization. The guide also includes some of the local Domestic Violence Awareness Month events that will be held this October, which is a great time to get involved. People just like you, helping in ways both large and small, provide the energy and creativity to push this work forward, bringing hope and healing to survivors and their children.

CCADV and State’s Attorneys Begin Training on New Domestic Violence Homicide Investigative Toolkit

In June, CCADV’s Director of Law Enforcement Services, Dan Cargill, and members of the Chief State’s Attorney’s Office began training on our recently released Intimate Partner Domestic Violence Homicide Investigative Toolkit (“Toolkit”). Over 70 police departments and prosecutors have already been trained. Attendees responded to poll questions during the training and indicated they anticipate using the toolkit as an investigative guide, a staff training resource, and a policy development guide. CCADV is working with Yale University to develop a long-term evaluation tool to assess how law enforcement and prosecutors are utilizing the toolkit.

With continued support from Connecticut’s Department of Public Health, the production of twelve training videos has been funded to provide ongoing, autonomous training on the function of the toolkit. These videos are expected to become available to law enforcement and prosecutors later this fall. Additional live training opportunities will continue to be provided throughout the year.

As chair of CCADV’s Domestic Violence Fatality Review Task Force, Dan convened a meeting of domestic violence fatality review teams from across New England to discuss domestic violence homicide trends during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the meeting, both Connecticut’s homicide toolkit and statewide model policy on the law enforcement response to domestic violence were discussed. This led to other states expressing interest in Dan assisting with the development of such tools in those states. He is currently working with Vermont’s Attorney General’s Office to assess the potential application of the toolkit in Vermont.
2021 Legislative Session Summary

The 2021 regular session of the Connecticut General Assembly concluded with a big win for survivors as Connecticut’s family court will now explicitly recognize coercive control as a form of domestic violence and provide survivors much needed protection through our state’s family violence restraining order. Public Act 21-78 provides comprehensive protections for victims of domestic violence designed to address the real experiences of survivors with all forms of domestic violence, not just physical abuse. This new law expands Connecticut’s restraining order to address coercive control, establishes a grant program to provide low income survivors with access to legal assistance when making an application for a restraining order, and makes a number of other criminal and economic justice policy changes that validates victim experiences and empowers them to seek help.

A cornerstone of Public Act 21-78 is the expansion of the definition of family violence in Connecticut’s restraining order statute to address coercive control, which will facilitate court-ordered relief for the many non-physical tactics abusers use to gain and maintain control over their victims. Coercive control entails power and control over the victim through actions such as isolation, humiliation, intimidation, and domination. Connecticut joins California and Hawaii which both added coercive control to their restraining order laws in 2020 and 15 other states that have modernized their restraining order statutes to protect victims from non-physical forms of abuse. This provision goes into effect on October 1, 2021.

The new law also creates a legal representation program for low income survivors when applying for a restraining order. While we hope to see additional funding available in coming years to make this program accessible in all courts, the initial program will be funded in the five of the state’s larger courts (Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Waterbury). In 2018, an initial pilot of this program demonstrated positive benefits for survivors, some that went beyond just the restraining order as attorneys were able to get victims connected to domestic violence services and, in some situations, offer advice about other court-related matters in which the victim was involved.

Finally, on the criminal side, Public Act 21-78 takes an important step by amending the existing definition of “family violence crime” to include violations of court orders of protection and conditions of release issued in a family violence case. The mere violation of the order (regardless of whether there is an additional crime, such as assault or threatening) has been shown to present a heightened risk for victims. Repeated violations of court orders often represent a course of conduct that equates to stalking which is intended to subject the victim to ongoing emotional distress. By making the violation itself a family violence crime, existing protections for family violence victims, such as next-day arraignment, will be utilized and offenders will be held accountable for their repeat actions.

The majority of this legislation takes effect on October 1st and CCADV staff is working diligently on training curriculum and technical assistance resources for both domestic violence advocates and our community partners across the state. Stay tuned for more! In the meantime, click here to read the complete 2021 Legislative Session Summary to learn more about Public Act 21-78 and other laws impacting survivors.

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