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CCADV Releases Latest Fatality Review Report

Last month CCADV released its latest report, *Upon Further Examination: 2019-2020 Report of the Connecticut Domestic Violence Fatality Review Task Force*. This year marks the 20th year of intimate partner homicide reviews conducted by the Connecticut Domestic Violence Fatality Review Task Force. Since its inception in 2000, the task force has reviewed over 100 cases and made nearly 50 recommendations designed to strengthen a coordinated community response to survivors of intimate partner violence.

Connecticut saw a notable increase in intimate partner homicides in 2018 when compared to the previous three years (18 in 2018 vs. 10 in 2017, 12 in 2016 and 9 in 2015). Since 2000, 278 individuals, 86% of whom were women, have lost their lives at the hands of their intimate partner. Connecticut’s average annual intimate partner homicide rate remains steady at just under 14 homicides each year (13.9). And while there was a notable increase in the use of edged weapons (7 in 2018 and 6 in 2019, compared to 1 in 2017, 3 in 2016 and 1 in 2015), firearms remain the single most commonly used weapon in these homicides, used in 39% of intimate partner homicides between 2000 and 2019.

According to Dan Cargill, CCADV’s Director of Law Enforcement Services and Chair of the Task Force, “The presence of addiction and mental illness, as well as recent attempts at separation or divorce remain consistent trends in the reviewed homicides. Nearly 85% of the cases reviewed during the past two years indicated evidence of a history of mental illness involving the victim or the offender, while 46% of the victims had recently left or attempted to leave the relationship. These are concrete points of concern that highlight the need for continued community engagement and support for survivors.”
Given the common findings of the current review cycle, the task force recommends working with criminal justice and family court partners to increase education and awareness for victims and offenders. This will include efforts related to divorce resources, increase training and tools for private family law attorneys and law enforcement, and work with the CT Department of Correction to bolster support options for offenders. The group will also work to strengthen partnerships with various state and community-based stakeholders to improve mental health, addiction, and trauma-related services. Not only are these services needed to help victims and offenders of domestic violence who experience addiction and mental illness at high rates, but they provide important points of intervention for individuals who may not recognize that they are either the victim or perpetrator of abusive behaviors.

Click here to read the full report and recommendations

For questions or further information about the report, please contact Task Force Chair, Dan Cargill at dcargill@ctcadv.org.

CCADV, DPH & Division of Criminal Justice Release Domestic Violence Homicide Investigative Toolkit

As part of the release of the 2019-2020 Fatality Review report, CCADV also announced the completion of Connecticut’s Domestic Violence Homicide Investigative Toolkit, which was the recommendation of the task force during the 2017 – 2018 review cycle. The toolkit, developed in partnership between CCADV, CT Division of Criminal Justice, CT Department of Public Health, and various law enforcement and medical professionals, will serve as a guide and provide adaptable forms, checklists, and examples for law enforcement agencies to incorporate into their own established protocols. Homicide cases occur across the state in communities with varying resources and this investigative toolkit developed with law enforcement, for law enforcement, will aid all agencies tasked with investigating these complex cases as well as supplement non-intimate partner serious injury or homicide investigations. CCADV has already begun training law enforcement across the state on use of the toolkit.

While the toolkit is only available to law enforcement and prosecutors, those with general questions may contact CCADV Director of Law Enforcement Services, Dan Cargill at dcargill@ctcadv.org.
Jennifer Little-Greer

Please help CCADV welcome our newest member of the Board of Directors, Jennifer Little-Greer. Ms. Little-Greer currently serves as the Executive Director of the Minority Construction Council. She is responsible for leading advocacy efforts, increasing and maintaining corporate and minority business contractor memberships, developing programming for MBE contractors, and executing an annual business plan and mission to the organizations overall strategic plan.

As an active member of the faith community through membership with both the Bethel A.M.E Church in Bloomfield where her husband is the pastor, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church Women Missionary Society, Ms. Little-Greer focuses on aiding and advocating for women and children in Connecticut through community outreach. She hopes to bridge a gap by partnering with churches to receive training to recognize when someone is in an abusive relationship so they can connect to CCADV and our 18 member organizations.

CCADV Board Chair, David Bogan, notes that Jennifer brings with her immeasurable skills in management and diversity that will have a meaningful impact on the work of CCADV. Said Bogan, "As an active champion of diversity in the construction industry, she is well positioned to strengthen CCADV's efforts to ensure an equitable and accessible domestic violence service system."

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**Thank you! AT&T Donates $25,000 Worth of PPE**

In January, CCADV and our 18 member organizations received a generous donation of safety and personal health supplies from AT&T to assist as our member organizations continue to carry out their missions during the COVID-19 pandemic. A delivery containing $25,000-worth of supplies arrived at CCADV’s office in Glastonbury. The delivery included 6,000 reusable face coverings and three pallets of hand sanitizer, containing approximately 4,000 bottles in various sizes. The supplies, which CCADV has distributed to our 18 member organizations, will facilitate the ability of our advocates to provide much needed services, while also ensuring that survivors and their children can access free health supplies. We are deeply grateful to our partners at AT&T for their ongoing leadership to support the needs of survivors and the dedicated advocates who serve those survivors every day.

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**Faith-Based Ambassador Training Program Kicks Off**
Second Round of Trainings

Last fall CCADV kicked off a new project aimed at increasing knowledge of domestic violence services within traditionally underserved communities, particularly communities of color. Led by Wanda Gaines, Director of Diversity & Accessibility, and Kai Belton, Safe Connect Clinical Director, the Faith-based Ambassador Training Program seeks to offer support and guidance to faith leaders, a critical resource within many communities of color. Recognizing that some survivors may either be unaware of domestic violence services or feel that existing services are not the best option to meet their needs, CCADV developed this program to build the capacity and knowledge of faith leaders with whom some survivors may feel more comfortable engaging.

The training program is run in both English and Spanish, once per week over several consecutive weeks. Training topics include the dynamics of domestic violence, impacts on children and families, services available at CCADV’s 18 member organizations and Safe Connect, and ways in which faith-based organizations can be a resource as it relates to domestic violence.

The first training series held during the fall included 23 participants who were eager to learn about how they could help, often recounting stories about how domestic violence had impacted either their personal relationships or those of their congregation members. Citing a desire to be better equipped with information that would build their confidence to respond, participants have begun having difficult conversations within their churches, doing presentations and increasing awareness about the issue and available services. Some have even started women’s groups focused on healthy relationships.

A second series of Spanish training is already underway, with the second English training set to begin on March 10th. If you are a member of a faith-based organization and interested in training, please contact Kai Belton for training in English at kbelton@ctcadv.org or Wanda Gaines for training in Spanish at wgaines@ctcadv.org.

CCADV Relaunches Pro Bono Restraining Order Project

In January, CCADV’S Legal Advocacy team, with much support from Ed Heath and Dan Brody from Robinson & Cole and Enelsa Diaz from GHLA, relaunched the Pro Bono Restraining Order Project (PBRO) in Hartford. The PBRO recruiters brought together 43 attorneys from a variety of backgrounds -family law to business litigation, large firms to solo practitioners. Volunteers complete a required training program before representing family violence victims in restraining order hearings.

Most parties in family court in Connecticut are self-represented, with victims in restraining order hearings being no exception. One experienced volunteer stated it best when saying “there is simply no substitute for legal counsel. As you can imagine, the applicants often struggle with the process and they make procedural and tactical mistakes.” The PBRO project helps to fill the significant gap in coverage for restraining order victims who can’t afford the expense of an attorney but don’t meet the threshold to qualify for legal aid. It also enables legal aid attorneys to focus on other legal proceedings which are even more complicated than restraining order hearings.

Although the PBRO project is currently exclusive to the Hartford JD, the Legal Advocacy team is hoping to expand the project statewide by expanding to neighboring judicial districts and planning a recruitment
strategy for the New Haven area. If you want to volunteer or if you’re interested in helping to expand this project to your area, please contact Director of Legal Advocacy, Rhonda Morra, at rmorra@ctcadv.org or PBRO Coordinator, Katie Hieatt, at khieatt@ctcadv.org. Allies from all over Connecticut are encouraged to reach out.

Click here to view the project's informational flyer.

Now Available - New Safe Connect PSA in Mandarin!

Check out Safe Connect’s newest PSA in Mandarin. Seeking to further engage Mandarin-speaking Asian survivors, the PSA looks to identify the types of abusive behaviors that are more common within Asian families. This may include in-laws engaging in verbal and emotionally abusive behaviors that further compound the isolation experienced by the victim. The PSA also highlights the confidential nature of services, hoping to reassure Asian survivors who may feel pressure due to cultural stigmas about publicly sharing family problems. The strong collectivist nature of Asian cultures is a significant deterrent to formal help seeking. In addition to the new PSA, CCADV is in the process of developing brochures and posters in Mandarin, along with several other languages assessed to be prominent in Connecticut. Stay tuned!

New CCADV Report Examines Children's Experiences in Shelter

In December, CCADV released its latest version of Through the Eyes of a Child: Understanding the Experiences and Perspectives of Children Living in Shelter. This project was first initiated in 2015 to assess and understand the experiences of children who reside for a period of time in one of the state’s 18 domestic violence emergency shelter settings. It is our ongoing practice to capture feedback from survivors, in this case child survivors, so that we may learn, adjust and improve our approach to serving this young population. Most importantly, we always seek to understand the efficacy of our work and aim to do better. For this reason, CCADV selected to conduct a second phase of the Through the Eyes of a Child assessment in 2020 to benchmark our progress and identify continued opportunities for improvement.

CCADV, at its core, is a social justice serving organization. As service providers embedded within a system of power, we acknowledge that we are accountable to the people who need our support. We must ensure services are equitable for all victims and survivors. Services must steadfastly address the myriad of additional barriers experienced by communities of color and must be accessible despite these barriers. Explicitly placing a focus on the experience of children of color was therefore especially necessary through this assessment.
Throughout the process, advocates taught us a great deal about the important work they do and their commitment to working with our youngest survivors. Children taught us about the importance of safe spaces, their need for autonomy and the significance of listening and learning from them. Recommendations include prioritizing safe spaces for children, addressing a lack of diversity and cultural representation among advocates, attaining resources to adequately support children impacted by domestic violence, and building additional training and technical assistance on cultural responsiveness, implicit bias, and inclusivity. Connecticut’s domestic violence service providers are committed to continue strengthening our responses to domestic violence youngest and most vulnerable victims.

[Click here to read the full report.]

**Congratulations Dr. Brennan!**

CCADV would like to take a moment to congratulate one of our Board Members, Dr. Tracy E. Brennan, on her recent retirement from her OBGYN role with Women’s Health Connecticut (WHCT).

As an OBGYN, Dr. Brennan has played an extremely important role in connecting her patients and fellow medical professionals to intimate partner violence (IPV) services. Dr. Brennan has been working with CCADV for several years now and has emerged as one of the state’s leading medical advocates for IPV education and screening. Dr. Brennan was instrumental in implementing IPV screening across the entire WHCT network and has served as a fearless advocate for health professionals, victims, survivors, and all of the patients that she served.

Since implementing the IPV screening and education process into her own practice, she found that more and more patients were disclosing abuse but were unaware of the many resources available across the state. Dr. Brennan saw an opportunity to give extremely valuable and needed resources to all of her patients by having trained IPV advocates available on site within the medical setting. Through Dr. Brennan’s vision and fierce advocacy, she worked together with CCADV to create and implement the Purple Ribbon Project. There are now 18 certified IPV advocates working on site at WHCT locations to assist patients and staff.

Dr. Brennan’s unending love for her job and incredible advocacy for victims and survivors is unmatched and we are forever grateful for the work that she has done for victims, survivors, and health professionals across the state. Although Dr. Brennan is retiring from her role as an OBGYN we are extremely thankful that we will continue to have her as a member on our board and a lifelong advocate for IPV survivors, especially within the medical community where she will continues to assist with trainings.

Thank you Dr. Brennan for all that you have done for so many in the medical field, for your patients, for survivors, and for the community as a whole. Congratulations on your retirement!

**Upcoming CCADV Trainings**
Below are some upcoming virtual trainings open to members of the public, all of which are free of cost. Hope you can join us!

**Understanding the Community Resilience Model**  
March 2 | 10:00 - 1:00pm

**Tools for Ending the Sexual Assault Epidemic for People with I/DD**  
March 3 | 1:00pm - 3:00pm

**Spring Health & Wellness Conference**  
April 7 | 12:00pm - 2:00pm

**Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment (CAPTA) / Plan for Safe Care**  
May 18 | 11:00am - 12:00pm

**Vicarious Trauma**  
June 1 | 10:00am - 12:00pm

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