



MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
COORDINATING COUNCIL**

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

MISSION:

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

October 4, 2024

Table of Contents

DVCC MEMBERSHIP	3
COUNCIL INFORMATION	4
TERM OF SERVICE.....	4
SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS.....	4
LEADERSHIP	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
VICTIM SERVICES COMMITTEE	7
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE.....	9
LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PLANNING COMMITTEE	13
OFFENDER PROGRAM AND POLICY COMMITTEE.....	16
SUMMARY	14

DVCC MEMBERSHIP EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

THOMAS MANION
CHAIR, DVCC
DIRECTOR, FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER
FOR SHERIFF **MAXWELL UY**
MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

NICHOLAS AUGUSTINE
ASSISTANT CHIEF
FOR **MARCUS JONES**, CHIEF
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

DEBBIE FEINSTEIN
ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEY
FOR **JOHN MCCARTHY**
MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY
MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

THE HONORABLE **KAREN FERRETTI**
ASSOCIATE JUDGE
FOR THE HONORABLE **SHERRI KOCH**
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE
DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND FOR
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

THE HONORABLE **LYNNE HARRIS**
BOARD MEMBER
FOR THE HONORABLE **KARLA SILVESTRE**
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF EDUCATION
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DORNÉ HILL
SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR,
CRISIS, INTAKE AND TRAUMA SERVICES
FOR **RAYMOND L. CROWEL**, DIRECTOR
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

THE HONORABLE **SIDNEY KATZ**
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

ROCHELLE PERRY
CAPITAL REGION-REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR
DIVISION OF PAROLE AND PROBATION
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

TONDALAYO ROYSTER
COMMISSIONER
FOR **JODI FINKELSTEIN**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

BEN STEVENSON
DIRECTOR
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTION AND REHABILITATION

THE HONORABLE **KARLA SMITH**
ASSOCIATE JUDGE
FOR THE HONORABLE **JAMES BONIFANT**
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

PUBLIC MEMBERS

AANIKA ARJUMAND
STUDENT MEMBER

MAURA LYNCH
COMMUNITY MEMBER

KENDALL STANLEY
COMMUNITY MEMBER

LAVONTTE CHATMON
COMMUNITY MEMBER

MICHELLE MAXBERRY
COMMUNITY MEMBER

MINDY THIEL
COMMUNITY MEMBER

JESSICA VOLZ
VICE CHAIR, DVCC
ADVENTIST HEALTH CARE

AMY PALUMBO
DVS LEGAL SERVICES

STAFF

ASHLEY NOY
MANAGER, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

COUNCIL INFORMATION**TERM OF SERVICE**

There are nineteen voting members of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) 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 six 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 Montgomery County Departments of Correction and Rehabilitation; Health and Human Services; and Police; the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Commission for Women; and the President of the Board of Education for Montgomery County Public Schools. In addition, there are five members of the general public appointed by the County Executive for renewable three-year terms, at least one of whom must be an attorney representing domestic violence victims, and at least one of whom must be a survivor of domestic violence. In 2010, the DVCC's code pertaining to membership was amended to add a student member. The student member is a high school student who is appointed to serve a one-year term that can be renewed for one additional year. In 2019, the DVCC's code pertaining to membership was again amended to add two representatives from non-governmental domestic violence service or advocacy organizations serving County residents.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The DVCC meets bi-monthly on the second Thursday of the month and has met ninety-nine times since September 2006. Meetings are open to the public.

LEADERSHIP

The DVCC Chair and Vice Chair are elected by members via majority vote and serve two-year terms. In January 2023, the DVCC elected Thomas Manion, Director of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center as Chair, and Dr. Jessica Volz, Clinical Director of Forensics, Forensic Medical Unit at Adventist Healthcare Shady Grove Medical Center, as Vice-Chair.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the eighteenth year since its creation, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) has advanced its mission of reducing the incidence of domestic violence and creating a safe community where families are free of abuse. In 2023-2024, the four committees—Victim Services, Education and Outreach, Legislative and Policy Planning, and Offender Program and Policy—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.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Victim Services Committee collaborated with the Safe Start Program by Chesapeake Counseling to offer free summer camp via Zoom from July-August;
- The Education and Outreach Committee presented the Choose Respect Montgomery Dating Violence Prevention workshop, “Expect Respect,” to over 7,000 youth in 18 Montgomery County Public Schools and private schools;
- The Education and Outreach Committee coordinated the 15th Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Video Contest and received 227 entries;
- The Education and Outreach Committee coordinated RespectFest, the annual Choose Respect event, virtually and in person where over 1,000 people engaged in content and activities;
- The Education and Outreach Committee distributed over 9,900 Family Violence Awareness Cards and Multi-Language Cards throughout the County;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recognized Domestic Violence Awareness Month with the campaign, “Know the Signs.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2023 - 2024

- The Victim Services Committee recommends continued implementation and expansion of the Safe Start Summer Camp Program through collaborations with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, Bar-T, and other stakeholders;
- The Victim Services Committee recommends continued partnership with legal services in Montgomery County such as DVS Legal Services, DC Volunteer Lawyers Project (DCVLP), and the House of Ruth Maryland in the next fiscal year to assist victims of domestic violence who need legal representation at Protective Order hearings.
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued collaboration with county agencies, community organizations, and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through an annual event, the video contest, presentations at area schools, and programs for athletes and other youth organizations;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued partnerships with other agencies and organizations to reach the community to ensure the public knows about the services available;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continuing to raise awareness of Domestic Violence Awareness Month with public events;
- The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault to monitor and promote legislation that supports the mission of the DVCC;
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation to expand the Abuser Intervention Program.

VICTIM SERVICES COMMITTEE

CHAIR: THOMAS MANION

The Victim Services Committee is focused on assessing current programs, systems, and procedures related to domestic violence victim services, especially those collaborative services available at the Montgomery County Family Justice Center (FJC) that keep victims safe, hold offenders accountable and break down barriers to long-term sustainability. The Committee has been collaborating actively with Montgomery County FJC allied agencies and other stakeholders to identify potential gaps in these efforts and/or areas of improvement. When necessary and appropriate, the Committee also seeks funding to offset the costs of any proposed recommendations. Furthermore, the Committee is focused on developing and maintaining collaborative partnerships to ensure that survivors in the community receive the best possible services at such a critical time. Primary objectives successfully achieved in the previous year are outlined below, as well as recommendations for the coming year.

SAFE START SUMMER CAMP

The Victim Services Committee worked with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, LLC, which runs the Montgomery County Safe Start Program for children who witness domestic violence, and Bar-T to launch the first Safe Start Summer Camp during the summer of 2019. In 2023, four children participated in the Safe Start Summer Camp Counseling Program through Chesapeake Counseling Associates, LLC.



RECOMMENDATION: The Victim Services Committee recommends continued implementation and expansion of the Safe Start Summer Camp Program through collaborations with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, Bar-T, and other stakeholders.

LOW RATES OF PROTECTIVE ORDER REPRESENTATION

According to the 2022 Court Watch Montgomery annual report, “Petitioners obtained final Protective Orders at a much higher rate when supported in court by a victim advocated or attorney, yet seventy-four percent of Petitioners appeared alone at the final Protective Order hear”.

The Victim Services Committee has been working with legal services in Montgomery County such as DVS Legal Services, DC Volunteer Lawyer Project (DCVLP), and the House of Ruth Maryland to conduct assessments and identify strategies to address this issue.

RECOMMENDATION: The Victim Services Committee recommends continued partnership with legal services in Montgomery County such as DVS Legal Services, DC Volunteer Lawyer Project (DCVLP), and the House of Ruth Maryland in the next fiscal year to assist victims of domestic violence who need legal representation at the Protective Order hearing.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

CHAIR: DEBBIE FEINSTEIN

The Education and Outreach Committee continued to focus on domestic violence prevention this year. The teen dating violence prevention initiative, titled Choose Respect Montgomery, includes four primary programs: a teen dating violence workshop, “Expect Respect,” which is presented to middle and high schools in the County; programs for athletes to build a culture of respect, an annual event for teens, their parents, educators, and youth service providers; and a public service announcement video contest for teens. This year, the Committee promoted Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2023, held RespectFest virtually and in person, and distributed awareness materials on family violence prevention services. Highlights from each of these activities, as well as recommendations for the future, are listed below.

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY:

EXPECT RESPECT

Expect Respect is an in-class presentation for students in middle and high school. The flagship Expect Respect workshop is a 45-minute interactive program that teaches young people in 8th through 12th grades about dating violence, provides opportunities for student involvement and features brief videos on various dating abuse topics such as verbal abuse, abuse through technology, consent, and how to intervene as a responsible witness. Local resources and national teen dating abuse help lines and websites are also discussed. This year, the program expanded to include workshops for 6th graders on healthy friendships, bullying and bystander intervention and for 7th graders on healthy and unhealthy friendships and relationships with a focus on emotional abuse.



Expect Respect is offered at no cost and is available in English and Spanish. Presentation requests are received at the Sheriff’s Office from various school personnel, including health teachers, counselors, and school principals; and from community organizations, including youth groups and religious organizations. Representatives from the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office, the Montgomery County Commission for Women and volunteers facilitate the Expect Respect presentations.

This year, facilitators gave 100 Expect Respect presentations to over 8,000 young people at 19 schools.

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: **PROGRAMS FOR ATHLETES**

Choose Respect Montgomery wants to create a culture of respect among teens. To help, Choose Respect Montgomery helps athletic teams facilitate two nationally recognized programs for athletes to learn about leadership, respect, and conflict resolution. Futures Without Violence has a program entitled Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM). CBIM is a free toolkit that utilizes the unique and important role that coaches play in the lives of male-identified youth. These comprehensive tools assist coaches in planning important discussions with athletes about respect for women and girls, and that violence does not equal strength. Through CBIM, male-identified athletes learn skills to avoid violence and abuse in their relationships. Athletes as Leaders is a similar program for female-identified athletes. This program aims to empower female-identified youth to take an active role in promoting healthy relationships and ending sexual violence. Athletes are encouraged to be leaders in creating a culture of safety and respect at their school.

Due to schools adjusting back to in-person school and the constraints on school staff, only Damascus High School implemented Coaching Boys into Men with their football team.

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: **VIDEO CONTEST**

be supportive

listen to them without judgment
let them know that you believe them
let them know that you're there for them
encourage them to talk to a trusted adult

1ST PLACE
"TRUST ME"

For the fifteenth consecutive year, the DVCC coordinated a Public Service Announcement (PSA) Video Contest for local teens in middle and high school. This contest raises teens' awareness on the issue of teen dating violence, both through the creation of the PSAs, as well as the distribution of the finished PSAs on social media, YouTube, and in schools.

Participants were challenged to create a 60-second video addressing either physical abuse, emotional/verbal abuse, types of technological abuse, financial abuse, issues around consent, examples of healthy behaviors in a relationship or bystander intervention. Students were also asked to include the phone number for the Family Justice Center. This year, all participants who followed the rules of the contest received 10 student service learning (SSL) hours. Participants submitted 283 entries (by 478 students) from 60 different schools. This year's winner, announced at RespectFest on April 7, 2024, was "Trust Me" by a student at Ridgeview Middle School. Along with the winners chosen by a panel of judges (\$1,000 for first prize, \$750 for second, \$500 for third, and gift cards for two honorable mentions), 2,354 students from around the county viewed and voted on a "fan favorite" video, which won \$500. The Fan Favorite was awarded to "Does Your Partner

Love You” by a student at North Bethesda Middle School. The award money was provided by the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation. To view all of the winning videos, please visit <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/chooserespect/video.html>.

The DVCC will launch the 2025 contest in the Fall of 2024. Entries will be accepted in English and Spanish, and cash prizes will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners at RespectFest in the Spring of 2025.

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: **RESPECTFEST**

RespectFest took place virtually from April 1st - April 14th and in person on April 7th. During the two weeks of virtual events, middle school, and high school students could attend workshops via Zoom on how to have a healthy relationship, consent, and bystander intervention.

In addition, students could also engage in the content on their own time with various online activities that addressed how to help a friend, healthy and unhealthy relationships, warning signs, types of abuse, dating violence, technology abuse, and a scenarios quiz. Students were also able to learn about different topics through the daily social media posts on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.



On April 7th, the in-person festival was held at the Wheaton Community Recreation Center. Over 350 participants attended. There were educational learning booths with activities addressing dating violence, how to help a friend, consent, bullying, financial abuse, technology abuse and how to talk to your child, in addition to yoga classes. These booths were led by the One Love Foundation, the Commission for Women, the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Career Catchers, House of Ruth Maryland, Crittenton Services of Greater Washington, the Montgomery County Police Department, and the Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office. Students could earn student service-learning hours if they engaged with these booths. There were also performances from singing and dancing groups from area schools. Participants could also visit the over 25 organizations that participated in the resource fair, get food from the concession stands, and enter the raffle contest.

RespectFest was a collaboration of partnerships with the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, States Attorney’s Office, Montgomery County Police Department, Commission for Women, Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery County Department of Recreation, Montgomery County Parks, and with generous funding from the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation, Friends of KD, Cava Mezze, Bella Balloons, and Thrive Yoga.

RespectFest engaged over 1,000 people on what dating violence is, the importance of speaking out about it, and how to help people who are in abusive relationships. The more people who know about dating violence the better chance we have to lower the rates. In addition, the more people who know where to go for help leads to more people getting help and living lives free of violence.

RECOMMENDATION: It is the recommendation of the Education and Outreach Committee to continue and expand collaboration with county agencies, community organizations, and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through an annual event, the video contest, presentations at area schools, and programs for athletes and other youth organizations.

AWARENESS CARDS

Throughout the year, the Education and Outreach Committee continued to distribute both the Family Violence Awareness Card and the FJC Multilanguage Card to organizations and businesses in the county. The cards are available on RideOn buses, in the public libraries, and through food distribution sites. They can be ordered online for free to be distributed by anyone. This fiscal year over 9,000 cards have been distributed.

RECOMMENDATION: The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued partnerships with other agencies and organizations to outreach to the community to ensure the public knows about services available.

PROMOTION OF AWARENESS MONTHS



To bring attention to Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2023, the Education and Outreach Committee created the “Know the Signs” displays posted outside the Silver Spring Civic Center throughout October. These displays included warning signs in English and Spanish of domestic violence and Montgomery County resources available to those experiencing abuse. The Montgomery County Council with the County Executive and Montgomery County Public Schools presented Proclamations for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

RECOMMENDATION: The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continuing to raise awareness of Domestic Violence Awareness Month with public events.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PLANNING COMMITTEE

CHAIR: MAURA LYNCH

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

PASSED

HB496/SB758- Consent and Repeal of Force

This bill repeals the requirement that the state proves "force or threat of force" in 2nd-degree rape cases and creates a definition of "consent" applicable through the sex crime subtitle. The bill will not require a collection of data on rape and sex offense charges and convictions, including information such as sex, age, and race.

HB656- Funding for Comprehensive Intimate Partner Violence Programs

This bill will strengthen the funding requirements for programs providing comprehensive services to survivors of intimate partner violence and establish the federally recognized domestic violence coalition (The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence) as the agency responsible for the program's certification.

HB544/SB391-Revenge Porn, Sextortion and Stalking-Time to Prosecute

This bill will expand the time to file charges in revenge porn, sextortion, and stalking cases. There will be NO statute of limitations in revenge porn cases, a 10-year statute of limitations for stalking cases, and a 5-year statute of limitation in sextortion cases.

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

OFFENDER PROGRAM AND POLICY COMMITTEE

CHAIR: BEN STEVENSON

The Offender Program and Policy Committee includes members from Montgomery County and Maryland State agencies that focus on domestic violence offender intervention. Committee members focus 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.

ABUSER INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The Offender Program and Policy Committee is continuing to work on initiatives to expand the Abuser Intervention Program (AIP). The AIP program is a 22-week group therapy program for individuals who are abusive to their intimate partners and who have been court-ordered to participate. Participants learn to take responsibility for their actions and to communicate more effectively.

Currently, this program is available to protective order respondents, and defendants who are supervised by Pre-trial services or on probation. Since last year, the Offender Program and Policy Committee has been exploring the possibility of offering the program to those that are currently incarcerated in the county's jails on domestic violence charges. These are offenders who would greatly benefit from this program. However, because of the COVID-19 Health Crisis, programs offered in detention centers have been slowly restarting again. Once operations return to regular status, the Offender Program and Policy Committee will resume working with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to offer the Abuser Intervention Program.

RECOMMENDATION: The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation to expand the Abuser Intervention Program.

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 Family Justice Center 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.



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