

October is the 30th Anniversary of Domestic Violence Awareness Month

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. It is also Breast Cancer Awareness Month and while there is little research on the correlation of violence and cancer, we do know that intimate partner violence is an underlying cause for chronic health problems. The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that intimate partner violence has been linked to a range of negative health consequences. The CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey reports that Delaware women with a history of intimate partner violence have significantly higher rates of chronic pain compared to women with no history of abuse. The recognition of domestic violence as a public health concern has been an important evolution in our efforts to respond and prevent it.

This year is the 30th anniversary of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This anniversary marks a relentless effort to raise awareness, increase understanding of this pressing problem, and enhance our community response to keep victims safe.

Much has occurred during these thirty years, from the Battered Women's Movement which raised the voices of victims and bravely named the root of this violence as sexism and racism, to the implementation of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), drafted by our own Joe Biden, which provided funding for training for law enforcement and prosecution and services for victims, to the more recent understanding of domestic violence as a public health issue. The driving force through these thirty years has been the courage of the survivors, the commitment of advocates, and the collaboration of community partners.

Yet, even with all of the work over the past thirty years, domestic violence remains a devastating crime that shatters too many families. In Delaware, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 12 men are victims of intimate partner violence.ⁱ In 2016, over 23,000 domestic violence incidents were reported to law enforcement and there were over 3,700 calls to Delaware DV Hotlines.ⁱⁱ

We know that intimate partner violence can happen to anyone, but we also know that it most often happens to economically disadvantaged women of color. Somehow, the many strides that we have made over the past thirty years to respond to DV can seem hollow when we read about another family destroyed by this violence. It can be all too easy to believe that such violence will always plague our communities. However, larger than this violence, is the quiet goodness that works every day to create safety and peace. Throughout the state of Delaware we have advocates, social service providers, first responders, medical personnel and so many more providing supportive services to address and end DV, including 24-hour hotlines, shelters and transitional housing, counseling, legal services, and advocacy.

One of the tactics that abusers continue to use is isolation – making victims of violence feel that they are alone and no help is available. Our role as community members is to say loud and clear: help is available, you are not alone, this violence is not your fault and we are here for you. If you know of someone who is in a violent relationship, you can let them know that help is available by sharing the

resources listed below. Helping a victim of domestic violence connect with an advocate can be an essential source of support.

The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence is so grateful to our member organizations including: CHILD Inc., Community Legal Aid Society Inc., Delaware Center for Justice, People's Place and the YWCA for the work they do every day to respond to and prevent domestic violence. It is their dedication and passion for ending domestic violence and all violence that inspires us to continue forward with hope in our heart and confidence that we, together, as a community can prevent domestic violence.

This October we encourage everyone in Delaware to become a member of the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence as a way of showing your support to end this violence.

Delaware DV Hotline Numbers:

24 Hour Domestic Violence Hotlines

- **CHILD Inc.'s Domestic Violence Program**
New Castle County
302-762-6110
- **The SAFE Program at People's Place II**
Kent & Sussex Counties
302-422-8058
- **Abriendo Puertas Bilingual Hotline**
Sussex County
302-745-9874

ⁱ Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Full report available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/index.html>

ⁱⁱ Domestic Violence Coordinating Council 2016 Annual Report