

**MAY 4-5, 2026**

**Advocates' Training &  
Networking Event**



# STILL STANDING, STILL STRONG

**25 YEARS OF POWER & PROGRESS**



**Atlantic Sands Hotel &  
Conference Center  
Rehoboth Beach, DE**

**[www.dcadv.org/retreat](http://www.dcadv.org/retreat)**



# ABOUT THE ADVOCATES' TRAINING & NETWORKING EVENT

DCADV is excited to return to Rehoboth Beach for this year's Advocates' Training & Networking Event! This event brings together victims/survivors, advocates, and domestic violence service providers from across the state (and beyond!) to connect, share information, and explore efforts needed to address and prevent intimate partner violence, family violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and/or stalking. Over two days, there are many opportunities for training/education, networking, and self-care.

For decades, advocates and victim service providers have stood on the front lines of compassion and justice, facing challenges that would have discouraged anyone else- funding uncertainties, shifting political winds, even a global public health crisis. And yet, they continue to rise. With courage and unwavering commitment, they help survivors reclaim safety, dignity, and hope, ensuring rights are protected and accountability is pursued.

Advocates are the quiet champions of our communities, the steady hands and steadfast hearts guiding survivors toward healing. As we celebrate the 25th year of the Advocates' Training & Networking Event, we honor this remarkable community of changemakers through our theme, "Still Standing, Still Strong: 25 Years of Power and Progress." This milestone is not just a reflection of time passed, but of lives transformed through their dedication.

This year's theme and workshop topics have been carefully chosen through a variety of ways. In the fall 2025, DCADV issued a Call for Workshop Proposals to local and national partners in victim services, prevention, and related fields. DCADV's Training Planning Advisory Committee (consisting of representatives from DCADV's member organizations, task forces, and other interested individuals) came together to review workshop proposals and provide feedback on the training and service needs of Delaware's DV community. DCADV also used suggestions received through training participant evaluations to pursue workshop topics and presenters that would be most relevant to our community.

At this year's event, we aim to inspire connection, spark bold conversations, and strengthen the collective efforts to address and prevent intimate partner violence, family violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking. Just as importantly, we hope to nurture the well-being of those who do this life-changing work, supporting advocates as they continue to stand strong in an ever-evolving landscape of survivor support.

We hope that these two days will offer you an opportunity to engage in self-care, connect with colleagues and friends, and enjoy springtime at the beach!

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*This program is funded through the Delaware Criminal Justice Council by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Family Violence Prevention and Services Program.*

# REGISTRATION & LODGING

## Current DCADV Supporting Members, DCADV Member Organizations, and DE Certified Domestic Violence Specialists

\$155.00 (through 4/2/26)      \$165.00 (4/3/26 - 4/24/26)

Member organizations include CHILD, Inc., Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI), People's Place, and YWCA Delaware. Not sure if you're a member? [Check our current member list.](#)

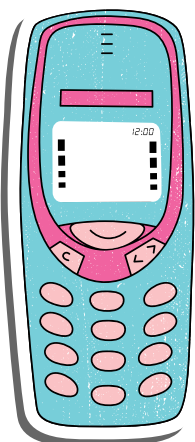
**Not a member yet? Visit [www.dcadv.org/membership](http://www.dcadv.org/membership) to learn more about the benefits! Membership rates start at \$15!**

## Nonmembers

\$175.00 (through 4/2/26)      \$185.00 (4/3/26 - 4/24/26)

## Attending One Day Only

\$90.00 (through 4/24/26)



A limited number of hotel rooms will be available at the Atlantic Sands Hotel and Conference Center at the group rate of \$145.00/night (plus 11% hotel occupancy tax and 10% hotel service fee). To reserve a room, please call 1-800-422-0600 and refer to Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence Booking ID #11454. The group rate is in effect for stays from 5/1/26 - 5/8/26.

Attendees are responsible for making their own lodging arrangements and for the associated costs.

# Conference Agenda

## Monday, May 4, 2026

8:00AM - 9:00AM Registration and Breakfast

9:00AM - 10:15AM Welcome Remarks  
Keynote Presentation

BREAK

10:30AM - 12:00PM Workshop Session #1 (3 breakouts)

LUNCH

1:15PM - 2:45PM Workshop Session #2 (3 breakouts)

BREAK

3:00PM - 4:30PM Workshop Session #3 (3 breakouts)

5:00PM - 6:00PM Women of Color Task Force "Fun at Five" Social

## Tuesday, May 5, 2026

8:00AM - 9:00AM Registration and Breakfast

9:00AM - 10:15AM Recognition of DE Domestic Violence Specialists  
Keynote Presentation

BREAK

10:30AM - 12:00PM Workshop Session #4 (3 breakouts)

LUNCH

1:15PM - 2:45PM Workshop Session #5 (3 breakouts)

DAY ENDS

# Keynote Sessions

**Monday, May 4, 2026 | 9:30 AM - 10:15 AM**

## **Still Standing. Still Strong. Still Showing Up.**

**Panelists: Barbara Benezet, DVS; Nancy Castellanos; Diedra Harper; Jenn Kutney-Soper; Juan Rodriguez, DVS**

What does it take to stay in victim advocacy for 15+ years- and still believe in the work? As we celebrate these years of power and progress, join us for a panel of seasoned advocates who are still here- still committed, still passionate, and still standing strong. In an honest and energizing conversation, panelists will share why victim advocacy matters now more than ever, how they've navigated secondary trauma, and the real-world strategies that have helped them build sustainable, impactful careers. This session offers reassurance, practical wisdom, and a hopeful reminder: while the work is hard, it is deeply valuable.

**Tuesday, May 5, 2026 | 9:30 AM - 10:15 AM**

## **From Impact to SHIFT: Rewiring the Nervous System for Power, Choice & Community Change**

**Presenter: Tara Gush**

Domestic violence does not only impact relationships — it imprints the nervous system. In this keynote, Tara Gush shares a brief personal story before guiding participants through an accessible understanding of how trauma reshapes the brain, body, and decision-making process. Through her SHIFT Framework, she explores how nervous system regulation restores choice, strengthens critical thinking, and rebuilds resilience — not only for survivors, but for the advocates who support them. Participants will gain trauma-informed insight into how survival responses influence behavior and how regulation creates space for safer decisions and sustainable healing. This session bridges lived experience, neuroscience, and community impact, inviting critical thinking and meaningful conversation about what it truly means to create and sustain safer, more inclusive communities across Delaware.



# WORKSHOPS

## SESSION 1

**Monday, May 4, 2026 | 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM**

### **1A) Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Traumatic Events**

Philinda Mindler, LCSW, Children & Families First

Children who have experienced trauma often struggle with trust, emotional regulation, and behavioral challenges—making it essential for caregivers, educators, and professionals to understand their unique needs. This session will discuss trauma-informed strategies to create safe, supportive environments for healing. The session will also highlight the importance of self-care, providing tools to manage stress and prevent burnout. Join us to deepen your understanding and make a lasting difference in the lives of the children you support!

### **1B) Cultura and Compassion: Supporting Latino Survivors**

Francisca Moreno, DVS and Erin Muñoz, Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

This training aims to highlight the best practices and create awareness about how domestic violence specifically affects the Latino community. The Latino community is one of the fastest-growing groups in the United States, yet it is often misunderstood. Instead of solely focusing on the challenges they face, this training takes a strengths-based approach, celebrating the norms and practices that make up the Latino community. The presenters will provide real-life examples and recommendations to help attendees improve the experiences of Latino survivors.

### **1C) Healing Through Storytelling**

Tamara Thomas, LPC, Transpire Wellness

“Healing through Storytelling” creates a safe, intimate space for individuals to share personal narratives, confront trauma, and embrace the strength of self-determination. This unique event includes panel discussions, open dialogue, and guided journaling exercises, allowing participants to reflect on their own journeys and explore new pathways to healing.

## SESSION 2

Monday, May 4, 2026 | 1:15 PM - 2:45 PM

### **2A) Making Friends & Breaking Down Silos: Practical tools for community collaboration**

Sonya Reaves, Dr. Carol B. Berz Family Justice Center

Too often, agencies get focused on solving community problems in isolation, leading to burnout and resource wastefulness from reinventing the wheel. This highly interactive session is designed for non-profit managers, government agency leaders, and community organizers looking to build meaningful cross-sector partnerships. Utilizing proven community building resources and tried and true methods, we will move beyond discussion and engage in facilitated networking and hands-on strategic planning. Participants will leave with a concrete, individualized outline for their next community event series, forge new professional friendships, and create a stronger, more efficient community-wide impact.

### **2B) Understanding Delaware's Fatal Incident Review Team**

Lauren Cuevas, Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

This session introduces participants to Delaware's Fatal Incident Review Team (FIRT) and its critical role in addressing domestic violence fatalities. Participants will explore why fatality reviews matter, how Delaware's team works, what can be learned from Delaware's fatality & near-fatality data, and how it compares to national trends. The session will highlight key findings and patterns, equipping participants with a deeper understanding of how systemic review processes with a multidisciplinary approach can inform policy, improve services, and ultimately save lives.

### **2C) Culturally-Informed Care: Best Practices for Serving Survivors of Color**

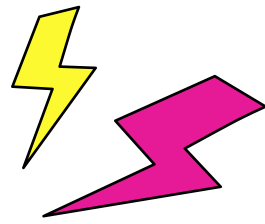
Leah M. Forney, Unculture Your Workplace

Survivors of color often face unique cultural, historical, and systemic barriers when seeking support for domestic and sexual violence. This workshop explores culturally informed care as a critical framework for improving engagement, safety, and outcomes for survivors of color across domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking services. Participants will examine how standard intervention models can unintentionally exclude or harm marginalized survivors and learn practical strategies for adapting advocacy, safety planning, and collaboration to better reflect cultural context. This session emphasizes relationship-centered practice, cross-system collaboration, and actionable shifts that advocates and service providers can implement immediately to strengthen culturally responsive survivor support.



## SESSION 3

Monday, May 4, 2026 | 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM



### **3A) Cultural Humility in Advocacy: Navigating Systems Without Losing Survivors**

Tamara Wilson, JD and Bailey Coco, Family Court of the State of Delaware

Advocates often support survivors while navigating complex, under-resourced, and inequitable systems. This interactive workshop explores how cultural humility and trauma-informed practice can strengthen survivor-centered advocacy when working across courts, legal systems, and community partners. Using real-world scenarios, participants will examine power, bias, and access barriers that disproportionately impact marginalized survivors. Attendees will leave with practical tools to support survivor autonomy, strengthen cross-system collaboration, and sustain equity-driven advocacy, all while continuing to stand strong in the face of evolving challenges.

### **3B) Fair Housing for Domestic Violence Advocates**

David Zisser, Esq. and Nick Beard, Esq, Community Legal Aid Society, Inc.

Domestic violence survivors often report how difficult it can be to find housing, particularly with so many of the effects of experiencing DV. CLASI attorneys explain a bit more about fair housing, and discuss what rights tenants and prospective tenants have under the Fair Housing Act to help them both access and remain in housing, and how DV advocates can ensure landlords provide protections.

### **3C) Centering Survivorship and Fostering Wellness Practices for Healing and Resilience**

Pamela Jacobs, CEO, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

Each of us experiences harm in this life and has inherited the harm of those who came before us. This harm shapes the way we see and move through our world and brings great strengths and lessons to inform our way forward. We speak of resilience as a human capacity to navigate this harm, but rarely as an opportunity to create wellness as a pathway to healing. This session invites participants to reflect on what they carry from their experiences and how these stories shape their work. Participants will identify strengths rooted in survivorship, practice wellness tools that foster resilience, and build capacity to challenge harmful norms in ways that support healing and resilience for themselves, their organizations, and their communities.

## **SESSION 4**

**Tuesday, May 5, 2026 | 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM**

### **4A) Strength-Based Engagement: Practical, Trauma-Aware Tools for Advocates**

Rona Harris and VerRona Harris, LoveEtcetera: Wellness, Wisdom and Wealth, LLC

Strength-Based Engagement equips advocates and helping professionals with practical, trauma-aware tools to build trust, reduce conflict, and strengthen communication with individuals navigating stress, trauma, or instability. This interactive workshop introduces simple, effective strategies for engaging clients, youth, parents, and community members using emotional regulation techniques, reflective communication, and accessible activities—including the Build-A-Burger Emotional Expression Tool. Designed using adult learning best practices, this workshop uses a teach-back model that encourages participants to actively practice and demonstrate key concepts rather than passively receive information. Through guided discussion, small-group activities, and peer learning, participants will apply strength-based engagement strategies in real-world scenarios. Attendees will explore how to adapt these approaches across diverse cultural backgrounds, developmental stages, and service settings while learning practical strategies to de-escalate challenging moments and foster safer, more supportive interactions. Participants will leave confident, empowered, and prepared to immediately apply these tools in their direct service work.

### **4B) Collective Advocacy for Criminalized Survivors**

Cindene Pezzell, Esq., National Defense Center for Criminalized Survivors at the Battered Women's Justice Project

Victims who have been arrested in the context of surviving abuse need advocacy that aligns with their legal rights and options. This session will explore the importance of partnering with the criminal defense community in service of criminalized survivors. Participants will discuss some of the widely-held misconceptions that advocates and defense attorneys hold about one another, and learn strategies for identifying and dismantling the barriers that jeopardize impactful work on behalf of criminalized survivors.

### **4C) The Advocate's SHIFT: From Survival to Sustainable Strength**

Tara Gush

Building on the keynote, this interactive workshop invites advocates to explore the deeper impact of trauma on the nervous system — not only for survivors, but within themselves. Participants will learn to recognize the signs of hypervigilance and hypovigilance that often accompany high-stress advocacy work and discover how these states influence perception, communication, and decision-making. Through guided breathwork and practical nervous system education, attendees will experience simple regulation tools that restore clarity and resilience in real time. Using the SHIFT Framework and a guided SOULSCAPE reflection process, participants will examine five key areas of their lives to identify where stress, depletion, or misalignment may be affecting their capacity. This session creates space for critical thinking, embodied awareness, and meaningful conversation about what it takes to sustain strength — individually and collectively — while continuing to build safer, more inclusive communities across Delaware.

## SESSION 5

Tuesday, May 5, 2026 | 1:15 PM - 2:45 PM

### 5A) Finding Yourself Within the Red Flag

Nina Morales-Perez, PhD, CA, ContactLifeline

Red flags are known as a warning, and in friend groups, calling someone a red flag is not a nice phrase. Learning how to find yourself within the red flag is empowering for you and for the people we serve. This workshop will allow you to notice the red flags we ignore, as well as recognize ourselves within the red flags.

### 5B) How Gun Safety Policy Prevents Domestic Violence

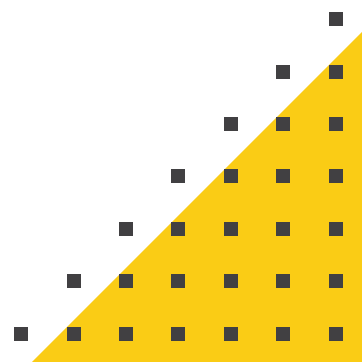
Traci Murphy, Coalition for a Safer Delaware

How does Permit to Purchase impact domestic violence? How can Lethal Violence Protective Orders prevent domestic violence? Firearms regulations play a critical and lifesaving role in DV. The presenter will offer data and evidence that outlines how Permit to Purchase and LVPO - two broadly different policies - work together in Delaware's violence prevention landscape and how they couple with other integral policies to shape safety outcomes.

### 5C) Trauma in Childhood: The Brain Architecture Game

Ava Carcirieri, PhD, Delaware Alliance Against Sexual Violence

In this 90-minute tabletop game created by developmental psychologists in 2009, participants will have hands-on experience learning about the early brain as it develops. The game will enhance audience's understanding of how trauma can derail brain development and the facilitator will discuss how these experiences can shape our adulthood as well as childhood. The Brain Architecture Game is a powerful tool for understanding the importance of relationships in brain development, and a great opportunity for interaction, group work, and creativity.



# Frequently Asked Questions

**Am I eligible for the member rate?** Individuals who are affiliated with one of DCADV's Member Organizations (CHILD, Inc.; Community Legal Aid Society, Inc.; People's Place; and YWCA Delaware); individual supporting members; and Delaware Certified Domestic Violence Specialists are all eligible for the member rate. Visit [www.dcadv.org/membership](http://www.dcadv.org/membership) to become a member or check your eligibility.

**Do I have to attend both days?** No, a one-day registration is available to attend either day of the conference.

**Will there be continuing education credits available?** We plan to apply to CEUs through NASW-DE Chapter. If approved, we will post the information on our website. All participants will receive a certificate of completion, All training hours also apply to those seeking initial certification or recertification as a Delaware Domestic Violence Specialist.

**What is DCADV's Training Cancellation/Refund Policy?** Please note that in order to receive refunds or credits, registered participants must notify the DCADV Training and Prevention staff by phone (302-658-2958) or email ([training@dcadv.org](mailto:training@dcadv.org)) no later than six business days (April 24, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.) before the scheduled training. Otherwise, all registrants, including no-shows, will not be eligible for a refund, and any registrants who have not prepaid will receive an invoice. Registrants receiving DCADV Training Scholarships are subject to the same policy and are not eligible for cancellation refunds or credits for the scholarship portion of their registration costs.

**Are there opportunities to share information about my agency/organization?** A limited number of exhibitor tables will be available. Please fill out the Exhibitor Request Form at [www.dcadv.org/retreat](http://www.dcadv.org/retreat) to request space. Spaces will be confirmed in early April.

**Will there be food?** Continental breakfast, buffet lunch, and light refreshments during break times will be available to all registered participants.

**What should I wear?** Wear what makes you comfortable and confident! Many of the workshops include experiential activities, and we want you to feel at ease to move and participate freely. In addition, the temperatures in the conference session rooms may fluctuate, so if you know you normally get hot or cold, be prepared! We strive to ensure the comfort and safety of conference participants by encouraging a smoke-free and fragrance-free environment.

**I have a question that's not answered here.** Who do I contact? Our Training Team is happy to help! Contact us at [training@dcadv.org](mailto:training@dcadv.org) or 302-658-2958 ext. 115.



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Founded in 1994, the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCADV) is Delaware’s federally recognized state domestic violence coalition. The staff, board, members, and volunteers of DCADV work with our member organizations and allies to support the empowerment of victims of domestic violence and their children through access to services and legal remedies. DCADV also seeks to change the societal conditions that support sexism, racism, homophobia, and other oppressions and which contribute to the continued presence of domestic and sexual violence in intimate relationships.

The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence envisions a First State where safe, healthy, equitable relationships, families and communities thrive.

