



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods, and diverse communities of Fairfax County.



COUNCIL TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Coordinated Community Response Committee & Workgroup Reports April 2024

Achievements & Ongoing Work

- April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month!
- The Accountability Workgroup completed its report including findings and recommendations.
- The first ever Sexual Violence Tier One training successfully trained over 50 allied professionals and community members.
- Over 50 allied professionals and community members successfully completed Domestic Violence Tier One training.
- Planning for next Tier One trainings underway for June.
- Guardian ad litem (GAL) Training Committee trained over 40 Guardians ad litem on the impact of trauma on children and families and how to be trauma-responsive in their roles as GALs.
- Trend Highlight - Rapid advancement in technology and stalking. See more on trends and emerging issues on page 5.

ACCOUNTABILITY WORKGROUP

The Accountability Workgroup completed its work on March 21st and forwarded its report to the CEDV leadership for distribution. The final report from the Workgroup was shared with the Council on April 12th and the findings and recommendations will be shared with the Council at its next meeting on April 25th.

COURT PROCESS WORKGROUP

The Court Process Workgroup split into subgroups to address the issues raised by the protective order (PO) mapping process.

Victim Access Subgroup:

The Victim Access Workgroup, as subgroup of the Court Process Workgroup, is in the final stages of finishing the content for the protective order process in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court (JDRDC). The final product will be added to the CEDV's website so that members of the public, including survivors, can obtain information about the protective order process from one central location instead of calling offices throughout the county to learn about the process.

Over the past months, the workgroup has made substantial edits to the content to ensure it is at a reading level that is easily accessible to most members of the community. The workgroup also sought feedback and input from groups in the community, including survivors of domestic violence. The feedback received was largely positive and helpful in clarifying sections of the content that were confusing.

The workgroup is in the final stages of editing the content before it is sent to the DFS Communications team for additional editing and is put on the Council's website. The plan is to present the website at a future Council meeting.

Once work is finished on the protective order process in JDRDC, the workgroup will begin to focus on the process in General District Court. Whenever possible, similar pieces of the protective order process in GDC will be pulled from information and content already created in the JDRDC process.

FIREARM SURRENDER WORKGROUP

This group is paused as it explores options for high-risk victims and survivors.



The Step Up 4 Kids Coalition (SU4K) has been busy planning for the upcoming year. The Coalition is currently planning to hold community information sessions throughout the county as a long-term project over the next two years. Front line providers and stakeholders regularly report there are increasing mental health needs for clients, and clients are having a hard time accessing resources. Many community-based non-profits report not having the same level of knowledge and access to resources as county staff.

A multidisciplinary team of county staff, school staff, and nonprofit staff are creating sessions for the community that will provide information about children’s mental health needs, including those related to domestic violence, and the resources available in the immediate community. These sessions will also provide a panel of hyper-local providers across a variety of mental health-related support services. The information sessions will take place in groups across the county that already meet and gather on a regular basis to ensure attendance. The planning group is collaborating with other county agencies to ensure success and using resources effectively.

The Guardian ad litem (GAL) Training Committee held its seventh training for GALs on April 6, 2024. Since April is Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month, the training focused on collaboration between GALs and organizations in the child welfare system. The Honorable Razan Fayez moderated a panel of presenters from child welfare programs, including Protection and Preservation Services, Foster Care and Adoption, and the Children Services Act from the Department of Family Services, as well as Fairfax Court Appointed Special Advocates. The panelists discussed ways in which GALs can collaborate with programs to ensure better outcomes for children and families involved in child welfare cases with the court. Trainers also presented on recognizing implicit bias and cultural humility.

The Protective Order Relief Workgroup, a subgroup of the Coalition is now co-chaired by the Honorable Divani Nadaraja from Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court (JDRDC) and

Tina Spurlock, Division Director for Intake. With the change in leadership, the group will be updating and revising its goals, but continues its presentations to the JDRDC judges on various forms of relief in protective orders and effective use of programs to support safety for survivors and those who use violence. Three presentations have taken place on mental health evaluations and supervised visitation and exchanged, with others to follow in May.

DV NETWORK

The DV Network continues to meet monthly and conducted its biannual trends survey in March followed by a trends and emerging issues discussion at the March DV Network meeting. In April the DV Network met in person and made sure to get a photo for Sexual Assault Awareness Month!



A group from the DV Network posing in teal to mark SAAM.

Trends & Emerging Issues:

Nora Mahoney presented the common themes in the Trends survey. The Trends survey received nineteen responses during this last survey period. Themes such as language barriers and mental health concerns persist. See bullets below for information from survey:

Have you observed any recent changes in the demographics of those seeking your services?

- Increase in male-identifying victims
- Immigrant population is more refugees and young adults
 - Issues with no education on dating violence, reoffending from lack of criminal process
 - Increase in Spanish-speaking victims, clients from Afghanistan with no English skills
 - Shift from Central American immigrants to more South America and Caribbean origins
- Women fleeing arranged marriages (but lose custody because of language/education)
- Increase in homemakers from South Asia
- Mental health concerns

Main IPV Issues Currently:

- Serious issues with criminal prosecutions (bond granted, alternatives to conviction)
 - Victims lack education around the criminal process, what to expect
- Insufficient shelter access, services at the shelter are inconsistent
- Housing – availability and affordability continue to be a major concern, especially as funding for rental assistance disappears
- Stalking – using social media, technology, AirTags (and similar)
- Sexual assault or humiliation, extortion and manipulation
- Need for more low/pro bono legal services across the board
- Language access for services (esp. Dari/Pashto speakers)
- Trauma-informed therapy (availability and other hurdles)

Resources or supports needed to advance work on the issues identified:

- FUNDING
 - To be able to pay competitive salary and hire staff
 - For training
 - For housing/housing resources, transitional housing
 - To extend or expand cash assistance, especially for those who do not otherwise qualify
- Incentives for pro bono attorneys
- Victim Services advocates and specialists who are bilingual in more languages

- More culturally sensitive and relevant resources
- Enhancement of neighborhood-based entities, peer support specialists
- Cross-training on a variety of issues
- Cross-community data on trends and outcomes
- More jobs, job availability for immigrants
- Multi-Disciplinary Team, more communication between service providers (which carries barriers because of VAWA confidentiality rules)
- Mental health resources, educational opportunities
- Services in other languages

Criminal Justice Trends:

- Cases are being nolle pross'd (dismissed) or given deferrals for serious cases
- Lack of or inappropriate treatment options being offered
- Misunderstanding and lack of education around the process
- Lots of miscommunication and not reporting to LE
- Lack of language access, use of interpreters
- Lack of knowledgeable prosecutors

Discussion: The group confirmed that the data shared (as above) was reflective of what they are seeing. The group noted that that many **IPV cases involve sexual assault, humiliation, extortion, and manipulation** and discussed that these cases are less likely to be reported to law enforcement due to shame, which presents a significant barrier in helping the most vulnerable within the community.

The rapid advancement in technology and stalking is another main IPV trend with unique challenges. With the increase in technology and its advancements (e.g. social media or AirTags), it has made stalking more accessible through multiple forms of contact. Many members of the meeting spoke up about their experience, citing social media promoting a shift in culture that has normalized actions such as tracking people's phones. Some brought attention to the fact that this topic has come up in conversation at countywide meetings and trainings. Some proposed solutions to work against this issue included more training and education around the misinformation and consequences of using technology to stalk others.

Lack of education around the criminal process also creates issues with criminal prosecutions. An example of this would be not knowing about alternatives to conviction, such as deferred disposition for first time offenders. At the same time, many victims are surprised by delays in

the criminal process and how rare it is to achieve a conviction. The lack of information also extends beyond the crime victim. One participant shared an example of a case where bond was granted, and the person immediately reoffended upon release. Furthermore, there is a need for more low-cost and pro bono legal services across the board for things such as: protective orders, family law, divorce, housing, and immigration. As spoken about previously, the changes in the immigrant population also create the need for language access/translation services – notably for Dari and Pashto speakers.

Another barrier to effective service is trauma-informed therapy. The lack of trauma-informed therapy and other barriers to therapy (e.g. inability to pay for services or a limited insurance network) sparked discussion amongst members who spoke about their experiences attempting to find accessible treatment for victims who may need longer term treatment after receiving the free, short-term treatment through Counseling Services with Fairfax County. Another IPV issue that is largely inaccessible is housing - it was noted that nearly every response to the main IPV issues survey question mentioned housing in one form or another. The main housing concerns are that there is insufficient access to shelters, and once in-shelter or connected to shelter, inconsistent services.

After identifying the main issues, the discussion turned towards what resources and supports are needed to advance the work that is being done. The overwhelming response to this was funding needed to help victims and survivors with housing, housing resources, transitional housing, and/or cash assistance for those who do not qualify for programs such as TANF or SNAP. Additionally, network members reported that more funding is needed to pay competitive salaries and to hire new staff. Other resources suggested included: the creation of a Multi-Disciplinary Team, increased communication between service providers, incentives for pro bono attorneys, more training on resources, eligibility, and other DV training to be available for partners. There was discussion around VAWA confidentiality restrictions, and the barrier that poses for the creation of a Multi-Discipline Team or increased communication between providers. Another suggestion regarding training suggested an increase in cross-training on a variety of issues so that staff have a more well-rounded knowledge on cultural humility and relevant resources. One suggestion that would contribute to working towards cultural humility

is to enhance neighborhood-based entities or provide peer support. Other needs that have been identified for the individuals we serve are increased job availability for immigrants, access to mental health resources, access to educational opportunities, and the ability to provide services in other languages – which could be supported by hiring Victim Services advocates and specialists who are bilingual in more languages. Outside of the previously identified main issues and the resources needed to advance the work, support around gathering and analyzing Cross-Community data to see trends and their outcomes would help ensure that the feedback and initiatives are reflective of the needs of the community.

One DV Network member stated that it can be difficult to collaborate as providers due to confidentiality; therefore, there should be training on how to collaborate more effectively. Another noted that DV Network meetings with built in “meet and greet” time facilitates warm handoffs and getting a better understanding of which resources are provided by which organizations. There was an agreement that one of the limitations of the virtual platform is that “meet and greets” are not as effective as pre-pandemic, in-person meeting networking.

Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Prevention and Training Committee

The DV training committee was re-established as the **Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Prevention and Training Committee**. The work of this committee has been expanded to oversee training on sexual and domestic topics and promote prevention and training opportunities for service providers.

2nd Annual Human Trafficking Training

For Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January, the 2nd Annual Human Trafficking Training was held at Fairfax County Government Center. This event became an officially annual event last year, following similar trainings in 2020, 2021, and 2022 which were well-attended and received. This year’s training featured a 90-minute presentation from Northern Virginia Family Services and Legal Services of Northern Virginia, followed by a 30-minute panel which also included representatives from Tahirih Justice Center and Safe Spot Child Advocacy Center. Partner agencies providing community-based services to human trafficking survivors in

northern Virginia report a significant crossover with domestic and family violence. This training was incredibly well attended, with a total of 72 participants. Based on this significant interest, a similar training will be held later in 2024.

Tier One Training

The first ever **Sexual Violence Tier One** training was held in February 2024. This 16-hour training on understanding sexual violence across the lifespan and the systems responding to sexual violence in Fairfax County has been long requested by county staff, nonprofit agencies, and community members. Modeled after Domestic Violence Tier One training, which has been held by the DV Network for over a decade, Sexual Violence Tier One sessions were held in February and March.

The training included presenters from 11 multidisciplinary partner agencies and was attended by 52 participants. Also, the first attempt at a hybrid training format for Tier One, sessions included an 8-hour in-person training followed by 4 2-hour training sessions provided virtually on Zoom. Participant evaluations reflected overwhelmingly positive experiences with this inaugural training.

Domestic Violence Tier One was also held this quarter at the Fairfax County Health Department on March 16th and 17th. 52 participants completed the two-day training, which featured presentations by 7 multidisciplinary agencies serving those impacted by domestic violence.

Beginning in 2024, each of these Tier One trainings will be held 3 times annually in collaboration with the Fairfax County DV Network and Fairfax County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART).

Upcoming Trainings

The CCR Prevention and Training Committee continues to support broad training on topics related to domestic and sexual violence prevention and intervention. DV Network, Fairfax County SART, and other key partners were surveyed on trending topics proposed for additional trainings 2024. Common themes included a need for training on trauma-informed care, serving LGBTQIA clients, technology-facilitated stalking and safety planning, and understanding legal

and court processes. Additionally, multiple needs were identified surrounding children and youth, including violence prevention and relationship education for adolescents and mental health support for children experiencing domestic violence.

Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

The Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) is a multi-pronged intervention that consists of a standardized, evidence-based lethality assessment instrument and accompanying referral protocol that helps first responders make a differentiated response that is tailored to the unique circumstances of high-danger victims. Shelter and victim advocacy services are research-validated protective factors for victims, yet the majority of domestic violence-related homicide victims do not access services prior to their murder. Therefore, the primary goal of the LAP is to identify victims in “high-danger” (risk of serious re-assault or homicide), educate them about the level of their risk, and connect them to services immediately after the crime, in order to provide them with options to enhance their safety.

LAP- CEDV Report on FY 24 LAP Data

LAP Expansion: The Fairfax County Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) team expanded the LAP criteria on November 11, 2023 to address the following: 1) provide greater access and critical services for an additional group of high danger victims/survivors - current or former dating or sexual partners, and 2) include all incidents of intimate partner violence with high lethality, independent of whether an arrest was made or warrant issued. This new criterion joins the existing criterion - couples who are married, cohabitate, or share a child.

The Crisis Response Services noted a 20% increase in the number of Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) calls this reporting period compared to the same period in FY23. The increase in calls occurred after Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) and DSVS retrained police and DV/SV advocates on the new LAP protocol, which was expanded on 11/1/23 by the Countywide LAP team to include current and former dating and/or sexual partners and assessment of all incidents of intimate partner violence with high lethality, independent of whether an arrest

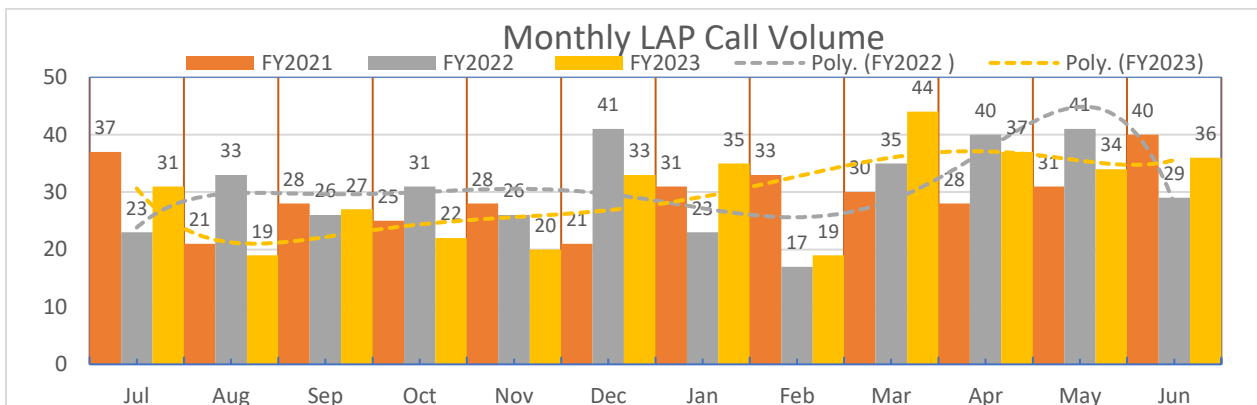
was conducted, or warrant issued. Before expansion, only domestic violence incidents involving couples who were married, cohabitating, or shared a child met LAP criteria. Expansion was based on research regarding high lethality indicators for current and former dating and/or sexual partners. In the month of December, the number of calls regarding current or former dating partner relationships equaled the number of married couples.

The post-pandemic numbers suggest that the LAP has continued to remain fully functional and operating at full capacity. For example, the overall number of LAP calls has remained consistent in comparison to prior years. For example, in FY 2023, there were 357 LAP calls, a 2% decrease from FY 2022, and 1% increase since FY 2021.

Total # of LAP Calls by FY 2021 – FY 2023		
FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
353	365	357

The monthly average call volume went from 29 for FY 2021 to 30 for FY 2022, and unchanged at 30 for FY 2023. For FY 2024 (includes nine months of data through March 2024), the average number of calls is currently 36/month which is 20% higher in comparison to previous years.

Monthly LAP Calls – FY 2021 – FY 2023



For FY 2024 (through March 2024), there has been an increased number of calls since the monthly average is approximately 36 in total. Table 1 below displays the monthly call volume of LAP calls since FY 2020:

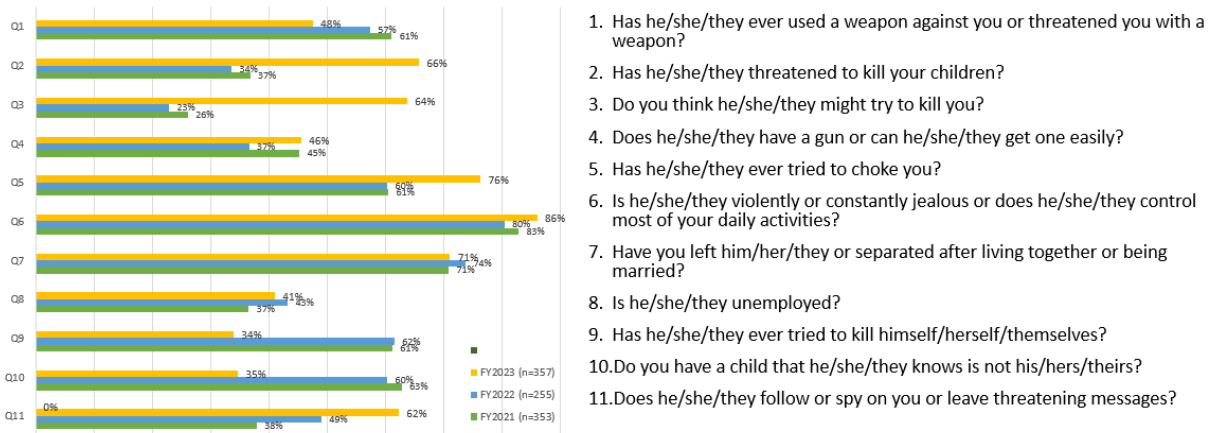
Table 1 – Number of LAP Calls by Month – FY 2020 – FY 2024 YTD													
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
FY2020	25	25	37	30	25	33	31	24	30	35	37	32	364
FY2021	37	21	28	25	28	21	31	33	30	28	31	40	353
FY2022	23	33	26	31	26	41	23	17	35	40	41	29	365
FY2023	31	20	26	22	20	33	35	19	44	38	33	36	357
FY2024	30	43	40	29	43	34	25	41	37	0	0	0	322

Since the LAP expansion effective 11/1/23, there is now new criteria regarding relationship with the person who caused harm which now includes current or former dating/sexual partner. Since the LAP expansion, the relationship of current or former dating/sexual partner accounted for 17% of the total so this selection will continue to be analyzed as more data is collected to determine if there is an upward trend with this type of relationship (see Table 2).

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Respondents who Indicated their relationship with the person who caused harm was either a current or former dating partner or current or former sexual partner.

FY	#	%
FY 2024: November 2023 – March 2024	31	17%

DSVS LAP Line Calls: FY 2021 through FY 2023 Proportion of Affirmative Answers to LAP Questions



Question eleven on the LAP deals with spying and leaving threatening messages. Since FY 2021, there has been a steady increase in those individuals who responded in the affirmative. The percentage of respondents who answered “Yes” to this question jumped from 38% to 62% in FY 2023. For the first nine months of FY 2024, the percentage remained at 62%. With the increased access to better technology and higher visibility as a result of social media, it will be interesting to see if these numbers continue to trend upward.

Table 3 – Responses to the question – Does he/she/they follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages? (n=304)				
July 2023 – March 2024				
	Yes	No	Not Answered	Total
Number	189	99	16	304
%	62%	33%	5%	100%