



# 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 2023

#### Achievements & Ongoing Work:

- The new CEDV Leadership structure agreed that enables more community input and voice. Updated bylaws to be approved.
- Many of the Firearms Workgroup's recommendations and best practices are featured in the Action Alliance's "Best Practices Firearms Restrictions & Protective Orders Toolkit." [Firearm toolkit revision \(vsdvalliance.org\)](https://www.vsdvalliance.org).
- TheSU4Ks Community Outreach and Marketing Committee continues to distribute Step Up 4 Kids posters throughout the community to sites including NCS community centers, libraries, and SACC sites- posters are available in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Farsi.
- The OVW grant funded Resilient Kids, Thriving Families Program continues to deliver services to children experiencing domestic violence and the broader community. DSVS' grant funded partner, NVFS, trained over 150 NCS community center and School Age Child Care staff in region 2.
- Accountability workgroup holding focus groups to bring in survivor voice.
- GDC PO Packet streamlining underway.
- Increased mental health services for children.
- Countywide annual report to be published soon.
- Tier One training successfully completed and summer session planning is underway.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY WORKGROUP

The Accountability Work Group meets monthly, in person, at 3:00 on the third Thursday of each month. Some members, and the Group's outside consultants, appear remotely.

Last Fall, the Work Group approved a Mission Statement, preliminary goals, and deliverables and objectives for each goal. This quarter, the group developed a process for conducting focus groups of survivors so we could have detailed input from survivors to ensure any programs we recommend would have support among the survivor community. Processes for conducting the focus groups were established and flyers were drafted and approved for recruiting both facilitators and participants for the focus groups. As of the date of this report, the Work Group is recruiting facilitators. That effort turned out to be more difficult than expected, and that has pushed out the timeframe for conducting the focus groups to May-June.

The Work Group has also begun a more detailed “deep dive” into its goals, deliverables, and objectives to get a jump start on next steps, which will follow the conclusion of the survivor focus groups.

## COURT PROCESS WORKGROUP

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

### **Criminal and Civil Protective Order Subgroup**

The Criminal and Civil Protective Order Process subgroup has met multiple times since beginning its work in December 2021. We normally meet on the last Wednesday of each month at 8 am. We met in a combined work group with the Victim Access Subgroup on January 25, 2023. As a result of that meeting, we determined that we should continue to meet as a work group but that we must have participation and involvement with a representative from the Commonwealth Attorney’s Office in Fairfax. On March 22, 2023, we met with a representative of the Commonwealth Attorney’s Office and obtained her perspective as to the work group’s goals and how those goals could affect change within her office. We are hopeful that she will attend our future meetings, and our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 26, 2023 at 8 am.

In our January 25, 2023 meeting, we reviewed the gaps identified in the larger CEDV mapping process for which our group was created. We then discussed the goals that were identified in our first meetings and tracked how we have worked to accomplishing those goals. We discussed how we were able to complete a revised version of the protective order packet of material in the Fairfax Juvenile and Domestic Relations District (“JDR”) Court with crossover from the Victim Access work group. We completed training for the Fairfax County magistrates in September 2022. We are following up that

training by creating, revising, and hopefully, providing materials and a resource card for placement in the Magistrate's Office to assist with their work with domestic violence victims and police officers. Lastly, again with crossover from the Victim Access work group, we are working to revise the Fairfax General District Court's ("GDC") protective order packet of material as well. This is our current, ongoing project that we hope will be completed in the next 3 months.

We also identified future areas of work, including, but not limited to, a training related to streamlining evidence in a protective order hearing, a training related to consistent relief requests in protective orders in both courts and in civil and criminal cases, assisting LSNV with their webinar series (if needed), and assisting the Commonwealth Attorney's Office with any change(s) they may identify as useful to address in the protective order processes in either JDR, GDC or both courts.

Last, but not least, Ashely Coleman, Esquire, has graciously agreed to co-lead this work group. We look forward to her leadership and meeting in-person now that the Governor has lifted the Covid-19 State of Emergency.

**Protective Order Relief Subgroup Report:**

No updates.

**Victim Access Subgroup:**

Over the first quarter of 2023, the Victim Access Workgroup continued to focus its efforts of creating material to ease public access to protective orders in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court (JDRDC).

The workgroup identified sixteen distinct parts of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court protective order process and has been working to develop website content since July 2022. This content is checked for consistency with other websites that may already contain information, like the Fairfax County JDRDC website or Sheriff's website. When a section of content is complete, it is reported back and discussed with the larger workgroup before being sent for editing. The workgroup is currently finalizing content regarding the final protective order hearing, and will be working on additional segments, including the firearm surrender process, appeal process, modification of protective orders in the civil and criminal court contexts, requests for extensions of the protective order, and protective order violations.

Final content will be written in language that is accessible to the public and will include a glossary of legal terms. The final "map" of the JDRDC protective order process will be placed on the Council to End Domestic Violence's website. The website will be the first time that information about all the various

parts of the protective order process and the information survivors may need to file a protective order will be housed in one place online. Once content has been developed, the workgroup will begin meeting with Kendra Lee, DSVS Communications Specialist, who will assist the group with the process of editing and formatting the developed content for the website.

#### **EQUITY WORKGROUP/COMMITTEE**

Since the last report, the subcommittee made recommendations for changes to the leadership structure to include two new positions: Vice-chair and Community Leader. The subcommittee also recommended expanding the role of the nominations committee and held an interest meeting for persons previously serving on the committee and for new members interested in serving in this capacity. Recommendations for changes to the Bylaws to reflect the new leadership structure were drafted and reviewed by the County attorney. Upon approval from this body, the new bylaws will go into effect after the Board of Supervisors approval. The Bylaws will need to be re-opened in the coming months to reflect more changes related to the CEDV's commitment to community engagement and input. Per the revised Bylaws, the slate for nominations committee will be presented to the Executive Leadership committee for approval at their June meeting and presented to the full Council at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

The subcommittee will engage with a consultant in a ½ retreat on May 19th to develop *“thoughtful and intentional practices to deepen partnerships with diverse survivors, service providers, and communities addressing domestic violence using an intersectional and equity lens.”* The consultant will also produce an evergreen video that will be shared with the full Council and will also become an orientation tool for the CEDV. The subcommittee plans to continue its work to determine the demographic makeup of who is served and who is not served by organizations represented on the Council and will continue its work to identify models of community engagement to assist the Council in getting regular and ongoing input from the community as integral to how it functions.

#### **FIREARM SURRENDER WORKGROUP**

Since the last report, the group developed posters for respondents with easy-to-understand information about their rights and responsibilities in terms of firearm surrender and to encourage them to surrender to law enforcement. Many of the firearms workgroup's recommendations and best practices are featured in the Action Alliance's *“Best Practices Firearms Restrictions & Protective Orders Toolkit.”*

[Firearm toolkit revision \(vsdvalliance.org\)](https://vsdvalliance.org). The workgroup is continuing to finalize a video to explain the importance of firearm surrender and to encourage surrender to law enforcement and the group continues to collect and refine data about the number of petitioners that report firearms as a part of their abuse story. DSVS advocates continued to collect firearms data on the prevalence of victim reports of their partner's access and use of firearms to threaten, intimidate, and harm during incidents. After a year (Feb.22-Feb.23) of data collection, 1 out of 3 advocacy clients report their partners own or has access to firearms.

The workgroup continues to explore models for establishing a High-Risk Team to focus on victims at highest risk of being murdered and invited the Geiger Institute to present one model to the workgroup. Finally, in January, many workgroup members attended the Alliance for Hope's strangulation training, hosted by Judge Carr and Victims Services Department (VSD) and learned about the correlation between strangulation and murder by firearm. According to the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention, "A woman who has suffered a nonfatal strangulation incident with her intimate partner is 750% more likely to be killed by the same person...with a gun." After the training, the workgroup began discussing how to educate the community on ways to incorporate this information in risk assessments and also in its discussions on establishing a high-risk team.

#### STEP UP 4 KIDS COALITION



In the first quarter of 2023, the Step Up 4 Kids Coalition continued its work for children experiencing domestic violence.

The grant funded Resilient Kids, Thriving Families Program continues to deliver services to children experiencing domestic violence and the broader community. DSVS' grant funded partner, NVFS, trained over 150 NCS community center and School Age Child Care staff in region 2. NVFS delivers prevention workshops to children between the ages of 4-10 served by NCS in Region 2. Workshops will teach them about healthy relationships, emotional regulation, and identifying safe adults in developmentally appropriate ways.

The Community Outreach and Marketing Committee continues to distribute Step Up 4 Kids posters throughout the community to sites including NCS community centers, libraries, and SACC sites. The posters are available in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Farsi. Katherine Quinn, a member of the Athletic Council and Step Up 4 Kids Coalition member developed a one-page information sheet that can be disseminated to youth sports coaches. The one-pager explains how coaches can play a role in supporting children experiencing DV through many of the interactions they have with children during sports practices. The Outreach and Education Committee will begin to focus its efforts on partnering with the athletic community via NCS in the coming quarter to continue to provide materials to coaches and athletic staff.

The Guardian ad litem Training Committee, led by Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judges Sotelo and Cardoce, will provide its fourth training to Guardians ad litem (GALs) in May. The training will focus on best practices for GALs regarding trauma and trauma informed care with children and families. Continuing legal education and GAL credits will be provided for attorneys who attend the half day training. GALs can continue to further their knowledge and practice by attending lunch and learns throughout the year. Speakers discuss topics that include domestic violence, appropriate interviewing of children, the impact of substance use, and other relevant topics and are coordinated by CEDV member and guardian ad litem Razan Fayez.

## DV NETWORK

### **Emerging Trends, Challenges & Unmet Needs**

DV network members participated in an online survey about emerging trends, challenges and unmet needs. In this quarter, main issues related to IPV, the needs of the immigrant community, and the support/resources that service providers need to advance their work were discussed. In summary, the following issues were identified:

- Increase in immigrant clients, especially those from Central and South America.
- Funding needed for those that do not qualify for county/federal programs.
- Not enough resources for the undocumented community including financial and housing services.
- Need for more pro-bono/low-income legal services, as well as immigration legal services.
- Lack of affordable housing. Lack of long-term supportive housing options, and rising rents.
- Lack of mental health professionals for adults, teens, and children, especially for those who are non-English speaking. More funding needed.
- Strangulation.

- Court orders that do not achieve safe custody/visitation/exchange of children.
- Co-occurrence IPV and substance use.
- Language access issues within criminal justice system.
- The Commonwealth Attorney's office is not prosecuting domestic violence cases, including severe dv such as strangulations, which is resulting in greater risk to clients.

Lastly, DV network members shared their achievements for this quarter sharing new partnerships, working through wait lists, creating new sexual violence training, good collaborations which led to increased survivor safety and more!

The DV Training committee is relaunching to better coordinate capacity building and training needs of the DV community. The first meeting will take place on April 24th. Feedback from DV community partners highlights the need to strengthen training opportunities for new staff building on the existing Tier 1 and increasing needs for Tier 2 and other training opportunities.