



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 January 2023

Achievements & Ongoing Work:

- Accountability workgroup holding focus groups to bring in survivor voice and help determine what goals, objectives, and processes for accountability are most important for the community.
- The GAL Training Committee hosted its second training of the year for Guardians ad litem across Northern Virginia.
- Fairfax County Magistrates received training on domestic violence and trauma. Follow up resource cards will be produced.
- Accessible material on firearms surrender produced for respondents on final Protective Orders.
- GDC PO Packet streamlining started.
- Increased mental health services for children.
- JDR Protective Order process to be shared in a streamlined, accessible way for public.
- Countywide annual report under construction.

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. The Group approved the following Mission Statement:

To support existing measures to reduce domestic violence by enhancing accountability mechanisms for those who cause harm and provide community opportunities for violence prevention and intervention to restore safety, hope and dignity to all impacted by domestic violence.

Having established the Group's mission, the Group next turned to setting preliminary goals. After each goal was set, the Group outlined deliverables and objectives for each goal. The Goals, with their accompanying deliverables and objectives, are as follows:

- 1. Center and listen to the experiences of survivors as a guide to inform the services, processes, and changes that are most urgent.**
 - a. Deliverables:
 - i. By May 2023, present a report on recommendations from survivors about experience to guide accountability work to inform this workgroup's actions and for a perpetual feedback loop to the system
 - b. Objectives:
 - i. By April 2023, gather survey data from survivors and those who cause harm
 - ii. By April 2023, focus groups with survivors to answer what is needed and what is missing in accountability
 - iii. By May 2023, develop a SWOT from focus group findings (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)

- 2. Restore hope and dignity for those affected by domestic violence.**
 - a. Deliverables:
 - i. Those affected will have autonomy in decision-making and adequate supports
 - b. Objectives:
 - i. Analyze results of focus groups/surveys and incorporate ideas
 - ii. Measurement tool, such as pre-post survey
 - iii. Tailoring of offerings (not one-size-fits-all)

- 3. Support self-determination for survivors and their families with options and resources for safely separating or restructuring family relationships.**
 - a. Deliverables:
 - i. Identify options and recommendations to expand and strengthen, such as:
 1. Easy and affordable access to couple's mediation as a follow-up to a BIP
 2. Financial stress management resources
 3. Shelters, housing, advocates, etc. for survivors
 4. Places for those who cause harm to go to increase safety
 5. Nontraditional interventions for those who cause harm, including those who cannot afford a BIP
 6. Peer support groups and the organizational support to perpetuate them (forums might exist that have strength and need to be identified)
 7. Any dyadic resources require careful risk assessment and safeguards in the community system (which we might not yet have in Fairfax County)
 - ii. Compile a menu of viable options and an education process for explaining options
 - b. Objectives:
 - i. Identify existing resources (including BIPs)
 - ii. Ensure system is equipped to engage a variety of resource options

- 4. Promote stronger links between accountability and healing.**

- a. Deliverables:
 - i. Present data on how participation in BIP (or other accountability interventions) relates to how the victim experienced healing (per focus group participants' definition of "healing" and "accountability")
 - b. Objectives:
 - i. Focus group, survey, and interview questions to include this question
 - ii. Longer-term follow-up data from partners of BIP participants
- 5. Create multiple pathways to accountability, including alternatives to the criminal justice and other traditional systems and responses, to reduce recidivism.**
- a. Deliverables:
 - i. To identify or create one or more additional pathways to accountability in the community not related to CJS
 - ii. To measure how well these work over time to reduce recidivism (using metrics of behavior changes beyond recidivism)
 - b. Objectives:
 - i. Learn from communities who have developed such alternatives
 - ii. Identify alternative measures of success
- 6. Use evidence- and practice-based methods to promote effective means of accountability.**
- a. Deliverables:
 - i. Gather information about evidence- and practice-based models used in various locations (including approaches that are relevant for a variety of cultures)
 - b. Objectives:
 - i. CCI can provide some of these examples to explore
- 7. Engage the community in its role in domestic violence prevention and accountability.**
- a. Deliverables:
 - i. Implement community-centered structures for accountability
 - b. Objectives:
 - i. Identify a process for engaging community entities
 - ii. Carry out this process
 - iii. Provide education to community entities to become part of this process (e.g., clergy, family members, Safe Havens "Between Compassion and Accountability", Futures Without Violence prevention)
 - iv. Conduct focus groups with family members, etc.
 - v. Include the role of children
- 8. Promote the awareness, coordination, and implementation of strategies to address policy, systemic, social, and cultural biases that contribute to disparities in both the occurrence of domestic violence and opportunities for restorative healing.**
- a. Deliverables:
 - i. All recommendations and initiatives of the Workgroup acknowledge and respond to biases and will address disparities
 - b. Objectives:
 - i. Measure baseline knowledge about biases and disparities
 - ii. Assure Workgroup is informed about biases that contribute to disparities

The Group is now planning a series of actions items for the next two years in order to work through these goals, focusing on the deliverables and meeting objectives. The first action will be to conduct focus groups with survivors. The voices of survivors will help determine what goals, objectives, and processes for accountability are most important for the community. The Group will adjust and set time frames based on input from focus groups. If feasible, the Group will conduct further focus groups among those who cause harm, advocates, government and non-profit responders, and other stakeholders.

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 and currently meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 8 am. However, the next meeting will be a joint meeting with the Victim Access Subgroup on Wednesday, January 25, 2023. We are combining groups to see what shared goals, if any, that we may be able to accomplish this year.

The group originally set three broad goals that they hope to attain over the course of our meetings. The first goal was to help streamline evidentiary issues in protective order hearings for both criminal and civil cases. Some issues identified as posing more challenges than others are obtaining police records, especially photographs, obtaining medical records, issuing subpoenas for documents and witnesses, and aiding pro se individuals, if possible, to move in evidence during a hearing. At this time, we have permanently set aside this first goal to focus on the second and third goals below.

The second goal was to help align and promote consistency in relief granted through different provisions in protective orders issued in criminal and civil proceedings in both JDR and GDC hearings. We identified that it is not just the orders that appear different between processes, but also the packets of forms the parties are provided to fill out may also be different. At our December 2021 meeting, we reviewed the newly revised JDR packet for petitioners of protective orders, and we only suggested a few minor changes to the Affidavit. After several more meetings led by Nora Mahoney, Tina Spurlock, Pam Sejas, and Ashley Coleman, we completed our review and total revision of the JDR packet of forms. We

reviewed the forms with several of our community partners, advocates, and survivors that have been through the process. We reviewed the forms with interpreters and other court personnel as well. The newly revised JDR packet for petitioners of protective orders was reviewed by the JDR Bench and approved in September/October 2022. The packets are presently being translated into different languages, and once the translations are finished, the newly revised packets should begin being distributed to the public in early 2023.

In December 2022, we embarked upon the process of revising the GDC packet of information that the clerks provide to petitioners in that Court. We have our second meeting scheduled in January 2023, and while we know it will take time to revise and seek approval of the GDC Bench, we are excited for the opportunity to help streamline information that the public receives in that Court as well. It is our plan that after we complete a revised PO Packet for GDC, we will then turn our attention to creating or revising an information sheet for respondents to receive with service as well.

The third and final goal was to provide education/trainings around the different criminal and civil protective order processes. The group partnered with the Chief Magistrate of Fairfax County and in September 2022, all Fairfax County Magistrates received training on the dynamics of domestic violence and trauma. This will be followed up by development of a resource card for Magistrates as well as ensuring consistent dissemination of resources.

Protective Order Relief Subgroup Report:

The Protective Order (PO) Relief Workgroup continues to meet monthly. This workgroup falls within the Step Up 4 Kids Coalition due to the nature of the work regarding children. This group focuses on relief that can be sought through protective orders in the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. Since the last Council meeting, the workgroup set the following goals:

- 1) Improve system of compliance review for protective orders regarding treatment for respondents to protective orders.
- 2) Provide at least three education opportunities for judges and court staff, and attorneys about treatment options for respondents and those who use violence, including family violence intervention programs and mental health treatment and substance abuse evaluations: and
- 3) Improve guidance, expectations, and outcomes for cases where parties have children in common by developing solutions and/or best practices regarding:

- Crafting orders that provide for communication between parties regarding the children to ensure safety for petitioner and children
- Training for judges, sub judges, and court staff on the impact of domestic violence on children in addition to witnessing the violence
- Guidance for next-friend protective orders and the involvement of child victims in the court process

To begin to address the first goal, the Center for Court Improvement is providing technical assistance on the creation of a possible compliance docket. The group plans to create a systems walkthrough of the various services that a respondent may need to utilize to ensure knowledge across systems of how services are provided, what services can be rendered and by which agency. For example, respondents who may be required to seek a substance use evaluation often go to the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board for an evaluation but cannot always receive treatment, unless they meet criteria for a priority population. This systems walkthrough will provide a starting point for the possibility of a compliance docket.

The PO Relief Workgroup formed two smaller subcommittees to address the second and third goals. Group members are working to develop a variety of resources to provide the information sought by the judiciary and other stakeholders about local resources. These workgroups are utilizing other agencies and projects where similar work may already be underway.

Victim Access Subgroup:

Over the last quarter of 2022, the Victim Access Workgroup continued to focus its efforts creating material to ease access to protective orders in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court (JDRDC) for the public. This goal was identified because of the protective order mapping exercise that took place in late 2020 to early 2021.

The workgroup identified 16 different parts of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court protective order process. Since July 2022, small groups of stakeholders in that process met to develop and write website content for the first half of the identified areas. 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.

Final content will be written in language that is accessible to the public and includes 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 hold 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.

The Victim Access Workgroup decided to refocus its efforts to address language access barriers within JDRDC and the General District Court (GDC). Previous efforts focused on collecting data directly from survivors who speak Spanish and Arabic as a first language and their experiences with court processes, but various obstacles arose that stymied progress. The workgroup decided to gain a more robust view of the obstacles facing survivors by seeking information directly from service providers. These service providers will serve culturally specific clients or have significant interaction with survivors who speak a second language, who are accessing the protective order process in both courts. The workgroup identified potential agencies to participate in this process. Plans to collect this data, as well as timelines, are still being established given the intensity of the other focus of this group.

EQUITY WORKGROUP/COMMITTEE

Since the last report, the subcommittee has developed recommendations for a new leadership structure of the CEDV that will be presented to the leadership facilitation group and to the full Council at an upcoming meeting. The subcommittee also welcomed two new members: Phylcia Woods, Chair of the Commission for Women and Judge Dipti Pidikiti-Smith. Once a leadership structure is approved by the Council, the Equity subcommittee will update the Bylaws to reflect the new structure and begin to facilitate its implementation. Over the next quarter, the subcommittee will continue to work on these overarching goals: 1) Gather a deeper understanding of who is being served in the community and who is not. Provide analysis of gaps and possible recommendations for improvement. 2) Make recommendations that integrate an equity and racial justice lens into all areas of CEDV work. 3) Consider various issues it identifies such as race and gender. 4) Recommend processes and Bylaw changes that address succession planning, participation barriers, diversity in representation, and community engagement.

FIREARM SURRENDER WORKGROUP

Darren Mitchell from the National Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges (NCFJCJ) attended his last meeting of the firearm surrender workgroup as a technical advisor in November 2022 because the grant ended that funded his work in Fairfax County. Darren has been a valuable partner for the past three years and was instrumental in advancing the work of the Firearms Surrender workgroup. Darren led Fairfax County through the court process walkthrough and helped us develop recommendations and action plans to improve access. We miss him already!

Since the last report, the group developed and distributed easy to understand materials to educate respondents about their rights and responsibilities in terms of firearm surrender and to encourage them to surrender to law enforcement ([Firearms Surrender | Family Services \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/family-services/firearms-surrender)) and finalized the video script that explains the importance of firearm surrender and encourages firearm surrender to law enforcement. The group has collected about 6 months of data about petitioners that report firearms as a part of their abuse story and will continue to collect this data ongoing. The workgroup invited an expert to present on a high-risk model and the workgroup continues to explore ways to provide additional attention, support, and resources to high-risk domestic violence situations. Finally, the workgroup continues to advocate to Fairfax County through the Human Services Issue Paper and position recommendations, for support of stricter legislation that closes the firearm surrender loopholes.

STEP UP 4 KIDS COALITION



In the final quarter of 2022, the Step Up 4 Kids Coalition had a strong end to the year through their workgroups: The Guardian ad litem (GAL) Training Committee and the Community Outreach and Marketing Committee.

In November, the GAL Training Committee hosted its second training of the year for Guardians ad litem across Northern Virginia. Experts on substance use and parenting delivered a training that explored the impact of substance use on parenting and child development and the role of the GAL in advocating for the best interests of the child. Judges from Arlington and Prince William Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts joined Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge Maha Abejuela on a panel moderated by Judge Melissa Cardoce to share the views of the bench on the topic. A

representative from the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board provided resources for substance use treatment available through the CSB as well as treatment options that could be accessed with insurance. Channel 16 recorded the training to allow GALs who could not attend to view the recording later. One goal of the committee is to create a library of trainings that new GALs can utilize to enhance their advocacy and trial skills for the children they represent.

The Community Outreach and Marketing Committee continued to plan for distribution of Step Up 4 Kids outreach materials in the community. The Step Up 4 Kids Posters were printed in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Farsi. Identified organizations and sites for distribution include NCS Community Centers, School Age Child Care (SACC), libraries, community resource centers, schools, and nonprofit organizations that work with children and families. The committee will provide materials that give child and family serving professionals and para-professionals the basic skills and knowledge to provide support to children who might be experiencing domestic violence.

The grant funded Resilient Kids, Thriving Families Program continues to provide a spectrum of services to children experiencing domestic violence and the broader community. The grant provides the only parent-child group that addresses the needs of children who experience domestic violence in Fairfax. Grant funded staff completed training for staff in community centers in region 1 as well as prevention workshops for children in community centers. A two-session training teaches staff about the dynamics of domestic violence, how it impacts children, and how to provide support and access to domestic violence resources. Prevention workshops use age-appropriate curricula to teach children about emotional regulation, healthy relationships, and other features of resiliency.

In the coming quarter, trainings for staff and prevention workshops will focus on community centers (including School Age Child Care) staff and children and nonprofit partners in region 2.