



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION ALLIANCE

solving the problem together

## Overview

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DECEMBER 2021

# Domestic Violence Action Alliance (DVAA): The Need

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- In 2018, 10 DV homicides; Erie County second in the state only to Philadelphia
  - None of the 10 victims sought help
- During 2019-20, law enforcement across Erie County received **15,000** DV calls
- In the City of Erie, DV call numbers rose in recent years: EPD reported an increase in DV calls from 5,826 in 2019 to 6,337 in 2020
  - Approximately 48% of DV calls to EPD in 2020 were at repeat addresses
- DV Agency - Select Recent Stats:
  - SafeNet 2020: Shelter for 167 adult victims; counseling for 849 victims; 1048 hotline calls
  - Safe Journey 2019/20: Served 534 clients; received 884 hotline calls; conducted 15 programs to community groups (536 participants); 125 programs to school groups (2070 students)

# DVAA Background

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- Formed in 2019
- Role: develop comprehensive strategy to reduce domestic violence, help victims and address perpetrators
- Cross-sector stakeholders engaged:

DV agencies	Social service agencies
DA's office	Higher education institutions
Law enforcement	Legal service providers
Public health and healthcare providers	Immigrant services

- Facilitator: Erie Together

# DVAA Process

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- Developed a working definition of “domestic violence” to be used across systems
- Reviewed data on scope and causes of DV in Erie County
- Looked at current efforts to reduce DV in Erie County
- Identified short and long-term goals, challenges, and made recommendations to address
- Researched effective DV strategies across the country; considered application locally
- Developed and documented a comprehensive strategy (Final draft nearly completed)

# Challenges / Recommendations

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1. **Lack of sufficient, consistent local DV data.** Recommendations:
  - A. Agencies and systems formally adopt common definition of “domestic violence” (Underway)
  - B. Take a more systematic approach to compiling and analyzing data on scope and causes of domestic violence, and impact of local DV reduction efforts
  - C. Adopt consistent medical billing and coding guidelines across healthcare providers (Planned for Healthcare Subcommittee agenda; group to launch Q1 2022)
  - D. Capture and analyze data on healthcare providers’ handling and tracking of DV patients, including screening and referrals (See C, above)
  - E. Law enforcement agencies across Erie County adopt evidence-based “Lethality Assessment Screen and Protocol” (Agreement secured; comprehensive strategy developed)
  - F. Adopt a fatality review process, formalize a “Fatality Review Team” and identify a process coordinator with technical assistance from the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (Due diligence underway)

# Challenges / Recommendations

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## 2. Need for improved interagency collaboration and better communication.

Recommendations:

- A. Development of a “Domestic Violence Resource Directory” (<https://bit.ly/DVResourceDir>)
- B. Joint stakeholder informational session (Planned for 2022)
- C. Implementation and use of ongoing communication mechanism

## 3. Cultural norms and biases impacting immigrant population. Recommendation:

- A. Develop and deliver an educational offering to help immigrants understand US laws and norms (Presentation created (USCRI))

## 4. Lack of effective treatment resources for batterers in Erie County. Recommendation:

- A. Explore national best practices and consider local implementation (Done; Stairways Batterers Intervention Program based on Duluth, MN evidence-based model)

# Challenges / Recommendations

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**5. Victims' fear/shame in coming forward to get help; lack of community recognition of DV.**

Recommendations:

- A. Create and deploy year-round DV public awareness campaign (Underway; <https://www.facebook.com/DomesticViolenceActionAlliance>)
- B. Promote “bystander intervention training” to targeted audiences (Underway)

**6. Inconsistency in DV screening in healthcare setting.** Recommendations:

- A. Develop DVAA Healthcare Subcommittee to vet DVAA recommendations and promote consistency in screening, coding and discharge in hospital and non-hospital settings (Underway)
- B. Promote greater understanding of LGBTQ+ issues as they relate to DV (Planned for Healthcare Subcommittee agenda; group to launch Q1 2022)

**7. Victim has no support other than abuser.** Recommendation:

- A. Through DVAA activities, help victims understand the breadth of resources available and connect for help (Underway)

# Challenges / Recommendations

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8. **Transportation to help and services, particularly in rural areas.** Recommendation:
  - A. Strategic placement of satellite offices/services in various geographic locations in the county



# Law Enforcement Strategy

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- DVAA Law Enforcement Subcommittee led by DA Jack Daneri, Chief County Detective Mark Schau and Mercyhurst Civic Institute's Amy Eisert
- Researched effective law enforcement strategies cross the country
- Landed on “focused deterrence approach” based on national evidence-based Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) program with success in Chula Vista, CA and Highpoint, NC
- Developed Erie County LAP Policy (strategy) maintaining fidelity to national evidence-based model
- Moving toward implementation:
  - Secured agreement from law enforcement agencies across Erie County, inc. PA State Police
  - Secured Hamot Health Foundation grant to purchase phones needed for implementation
  - Developed relationship with Pittsburgh firm to develop portal for report and data collection
  - Secured line item in Erie County budget to hire ADA focused on DV



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