

Bergen County Department of Human Services

ALTERNATIVES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NEWSLETTER

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIVISION DIRECTOR

Spring Blooms, Hope Grows!

Spring symbolizes hope, possibilities, and inspires fresh beginnings. This season let's embrace the renewal that spring offers by working together to foster a more supportive and safer community. We encourage you to join our circle in partnership, as we sow the seeds of change towards strengthening our community response and resistance towards violence—in all forms. Let's blossom together and surround our community in strength and unity!

Marisa Heluk, M. Ed.
ADV Division Director

The 2024 Annual Clothesline Project: A Bergen County Tradition 30 Years in the Making

On April 25, ADV joined their long-standing community partner, YWCA Northern New Jersey's healingSPACE in commemorating the 30th Anniversary of The Clothesline Project, a special community gathering to raise awareness about violence against all individuals in our community and showing survivors that they are not alone.

This year's theme, "How Would You Help? Options, Services, and Hope for Crime Survivors," focused on showcasing all Bergen County services available to survivors with over 2, 200 shirts created by survivors on display.



APRIL 2024 IN REVIEW 4TH EDITION HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ [Breaking the Silence on Sexual Violence](#)
- ◆ [Bergen County College Campuses Take On SAAM](#)
- ◆ [How to Be an Active Ally to Survivors of Sexual Violence](#)
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BREAKING THE SILENCE on SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence refers to situations where someone forces, manipulates, or pressures someone else into unwanted sexual activity *without their consent*.

Reasons someone might not consent include fear, age, illness, disability, and/or influence of alcohol or other drugs. Any person can experience sexual violence.

Contrary to widespread misconceptions, people who sexually abuse others are usually someone the victim knows (73%), such as friends (38%), intimate partners (28%), or relatives (7%) (NSVRC, 2010).

Sexual violence is not caused by love or physical attraction. Like domestic violence, sexual abuse is a learned behavior that spreads in environments with a cultural acceptance of violence and abuse of power.

At ADV, we often hear how sexual violence is used to control, demean, or intimidate survivors. Between 40–45% of individuals in abusive relationships report experiences of sexual violence (NSVRC, 2010), making it imperative to keep addressing the intersection between domestic and sexual violence in our prevention education, healing, legal advocacy, and abuse intervention work.

Join us this month in holding brave conversations with your loved ones on the topic of sexual violence, the services and supports available for survivors, and the strategies and steps we all can take to stop it!



Reference
National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) (2010). What is sexual violence: Fact sheet.
https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Factsheet_What-is-sexual-violence_1.pdf



VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

We'd like to give a huge cheer for one of our volunteers **Ruby K.** who handled her first DVRT call with utmost professionalism.



Ruby's confidence and knowledge during the call were impressive, especially considering its complexity and the need to utilize an interpreter at around 1:00am. We are incredibly fortunate to have you on our team, Ruby! Thank you for your valuable contributions!

ADV FEATURED STAFF

Laura Melendez, MSW, LCSW

Say hello to **Laura**, ADV's **Training Technician & Community Educator**. Laura is like the Legolas of our domestic violence Fellowship, having wielded multiple hats in her professional journey serving youth, families, and survivors of violence as an educator, activist, therapist, and, most recently, doctoral student.

Currently, she spearheads ADV's professional training programs, such as the 40-Hour Training Program for Victim Advocates, and prevention education curriculum and content.



Her passion for racial and gender equity work also inspired her to lend her clinical expertise to various programming projects at ADV, such as helping to launch our Youth Empowerment Program and LGBTQ+ inclusive services.

Just like a member of the Rebel Alliance, she's a driving force behind our newly formed Coordinated Community Response team for Domestic and Sexual Violence (CCR-DSV), partnering with advocates striving for a better future in a galaxy not so far away.

In her spare time, Laura recharges by practicing Jedi yoga, napping with her cats, and binge-watching sci-fi/fantasy movies.

JOB & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

★ Full-time Legal Advocate

We're Hiring

Looking for a rewarding volunteer opportunity this summer? Join the team!

Go to our [Get Involved](#) page to learn more or to apply for a position!

SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS/UPDATES

Community Education & Outreach

Bergen County College Campuses Take on Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)!

Every year, survivors of sexual violence and their advocates utilize the month of April to raise awareness on their year-long campaigns to end sexual assault in communities, workplaces, and institutions. Sadly, sexual violence remains especially pervasive on college campuses. It is estimated that among undergraduate students, 26.4% of females and 6.8% of males will experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (RAINN, 2024) before graduation.

College campus SAAM campaigns strive to change the culture and conversations about sexual assault amongst students, often focusing on building students' consciousness about sexual consent, safety tips against abuse, and access points to free and accessible resources.

ADV's Prevention Through Education (PTE) team joined students, faculty, and administrators from local Bergen County colleges in challenging misinformation about sexual violence, endorsing proactive bystander behaviors, and connecting students to free, confidential services.

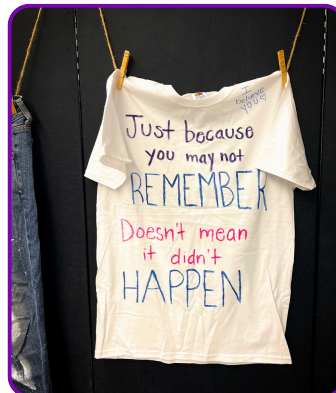
Thank you to our partners at **Bergen Community College (BCC)**, **Ramapo College of New Jersey (RCNJ)**, and **Felician University (FU)** for taking a stand against domestic and sexual violence!



ADV's PTE team distributing educational resources and giveaway prizes at BCC's SAAM student resource fair, hosted by the **Violence Intervention Peer (VIP) Center**.



RCNJ's Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) staff distributing resources & delicious treats to students at their Clothesline Project event.



A student t-shirt on display at RCNJ's Denim Day Fashion Show, an annual event intended to combat victim-blaming of sexual assault survivors.

If you are interested in having the PTE team come to your school to host a workshop, visit our [Community Education & Outreach](#) tab on our website and fill out the short application!



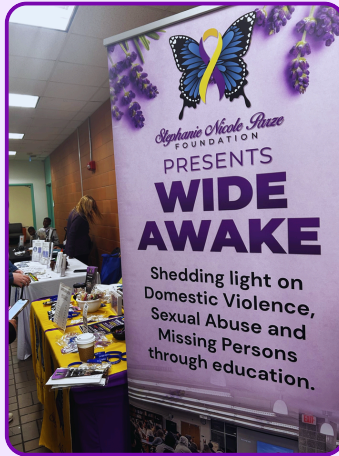
ADV's PTE team with FU's **Attitudes Against Violence Project Coordinator, Taylor Levine**, engaging students on the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA).

Reference
Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN). (2024). *Campus Sexual Violence Statistics*.
<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence>

ADV'S APRIL PHOTOREEL



BCC's VIPC staff invited ADV to join them for a presentation by the *Stephanie Nicole Parze Foundation*. The *Foundation* honors the life of *Stephanie Nicole Parze*, a young woman lost to domestic violence in 2019, and provides education and support to survivors of intimate partner violence, stalking, and trafficking.



On the day of the eclipse, our PTE team joined members of our Abuse Intervention Program (AIP) team for a fun break from work to (safely!) admire the cosmic event.



ADV joined YWCA healingSPACE's incredible team of community educators (left) at several campus outreach event this month, including at RCNJ's annual Denim Day Fashion show (below) organized by the Office for Violence Prevention (OVP). The attendees are encouraged to wear denim to show support for victims and survivors of sexual while showcasing RCNJ student and faculty volunteers as runway models.



The PTE team had a blast collaborating with the creative violence prevention staff at Felician University on multiple events, including Wear Teal Day, Denim Day, and a Stuff-a-Push outreach event! Rain or shine, ADV's PTE team was there to support the events with educational materials and giveaways!



Every year, ADV staff hosts an Intern Appreciation party to celebrate the emerging professionals in the fields of social work, counseling, and psychology for successfully having gained experience in prevention, crisis intervention, treatment, and community responses to domestic violence.

ADV would not be able to do all it does for survivors and the Bergen Community without the commitment, creativity, and resilience of our interns! Thank YOU!



You're not a victim for sharing your story. You are a survivor setting the world on fire with your truth and you never know who needs your light, your warmth, and raging courage.
-Alex Elle

How to Be an Active Ally to Survivors of Sexual Violence

Written by Sophia Traphagen 

One out of every six American women has been a victim of attempted or completed rape in her lifetime. One out of ten American men are victims of rape. Twenty-one percent of transgender, genderqueer, or nonconforming (TGQN) college students have been sexually assaulted, compared to 18% of non-TGQN females, and 4% of non-TGQN males. Why are these statistics so high? Our society widely prescribes to rape culture ideals. Rape culture is a term that is used to describe how our society blames victims for being sexually assaulted and normalizes male perpetration of sexual violence. A root cause of rape culture is victim-blaming, which is a common tactic used when reacting to someone being sexually assaulted. The blame is placed on the victim by asking what she was wearing, if she was drinking, why was she walking alone, etc. By placing blame on the victim and exonerating the perpetrator, we are sending a message that the perpetrator's actions are acceptable.

The way we contribute to the perpetuation of rape culture is through media, pop culture, language, and the legal system. So how can we put a stop to this?

- *Acknowledge it!* Recognizing rape culture exists in our society is the first step in working to extinguish it.
- *Think critically about media!* When you see nonconsensual acts in movies or television, talk about it. Think about children watching Disney fairytale movies. For example, Sleeping Beauty is unconscious and is woken up by a kiss. Is that sending a message to children that being touched while unconscious is acceptable?
- *Speak up!* Call it out when you see it happening. It may feel uncomfortable calling someone out on an offensive joke, but let's try to step into the discomfort together and ask the person, "why was that joke funny?" to emphasize how unacceptable it is.
- *Involve men!* Rape culture and sexual assault is seen as a women's issue - which it is not. It is a societal issue, one that affects us as a whole.

How can we be an active ally to sexual assault survivors?

- *Advocate for consent* - explain that consent should be enthusiastic and freely given.
- *Speak out about the root causes of rape culture* - such as victim blaming and gender role stereotypes.
- *Rid yourself of victim-blaming thoughts and behaviors* - instead of asking the victim why they dressed a certain way, ask the perpetrator why they ignored consent and used force.
- *Practice zero tolerance for behaviors that perpetuate rape culture* - such as jokes about rape and sexual harassment. Accepting rape and sexual assault as a laughing matter continues to normalize them.
- *LISTEN and BELIEVE survivors* - do not question their story and tell them you are there to support them.

Digital Abuse & Tech Safety Webinar

Join ADV's Prevention Through Education (PTE) team for an educational presentation on digital abuse and technology safety in the context of intimate partner violence.

Wednesday, May 15, 2024
6:00-7:30pm

We'll discuss the latest trends in digital abuse, safety tips, and privacy strategies for survivors of abuse, including:

- Identifying signs of digital abuse, cyberstalking, and Image Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA).
- Step-by-step guides to prioritize safety, increase security, and boost privacy protections on electronic devices.
- Tips for documenting and reporting abuse and how to access NJ's Address Confidentiality Program (ACP).

Click here to sign-up for the webinar, or scan the QR code:



Survivor Resource Spotlight

The **YWCA Northern New Jersey healingSPACE** is the sexual violence resource center for all of Bergen County. They provide a confidential 24/7 hotline to survivors of sexual trauma and their loved ones. Support is available to anyone ages 13 years and up who has experienced sexual violence, whether it happened hours or years ago.

Services also include:

- Short-term crisis intervention counseling
- Medical & legal accompaniments
- Individual & group counseling
- Job readiness & employment assistance
- Prevention education workshops
- Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) that assists survivors in the aftermath of a recent sexual assault that occurred within the last 5 days.

YWCA Northern New Jersey



To get in touch with **healingSPACE** staff today, contact their **24/7 hotline: 201-487-2227** or go to ywcannj.org/healingspace to learn more about their services.

ADV'S TRAINING INSTITUTE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

ADV's Training Institute on Domestic Violence provides online and in-person training for community advocates and professionals to enhance their skills in assisting domestic violence survivors. The training aims to empower advocates to interrupt abuse and intervene effectively for survivors.

The **40-Hour Training Program** is open to all and is especially geared toward individuals and groups looking to volunteer or work directly with survivors of domestic violence at victim service agencies requiring victim privilege certification. The training provides a comprehensive overview of domestic violence topics, including in-depth exploration of abuse dynamics in intimate relationships, the effects of abuse on diverse survivor populations, and anti-oppressive perspectives on abuse intervention and healing work.

The training operates in a cohort model with both live virtual sessions and independent self-paced modules granting participants additional flexibility. We offer the training four times per year with additional offerings on request. Participants are required to participate in live virtual ZOOM sessions to receive credit.

Training Topics Include:

- Domestic Violence Dynamics
- Continuum of Abuse
- Trauma-Informed Advocacy
- Values & Ethics for Advocates
- Societal Attitudes on Violence
- Anti-Oppressive Advocacy with Diverse Survivor Populations
- Crisis Intervention & Safety Planning
- Communication & Counseling Skills
- Domestic Violence Law in NJ
- Impact on Children & Teen Dating Abuse
- Healing Work with Survivors
- Abuse Intervention Programs & Coordinated Community Responses to Violence

UPCOMING TRAININGS

40-Hour Training - Accelerated 5-Day Sun Cycle 5/29/2024-6/5/2024

Wed-Fri (5/29-5/31), Mon (6/3), & Wed (6/5)
9:30am - 4:30pm (1 hour lunch break included)
Virtual via ZOOM

40-Hour Training - Standard Summer Cycle 5/28/24 - 6/27/24

Weekly Tuesdays & Thursdays
5:30pm - 8:30pm
Virtual via ZOOM

40-Hour Training - Standard Fall Cycle 9/17/24 - 10/17/24

Weekly Tuesdays & Thursdays
5:30pm - 8:30pm
Virtual via ZOOM



Ready to register? Fill out our **Online Registration Form**

For more information, go to our [Training Institute for Domestic Violence](#) page.

Join the CCR-DSV Movement



The **Bergen County Coordinated Community Response to Domestic & Sexual Violence (CCR-DSV)** is a community network of individuals and organizations in the County that coordinates and supports collaborative efforts to reduce domestic and sexual violence, dating abuse, and coercive control. We accomplish this through awareness-raising, prevention, education, and advocacy.

The CCR-DSV recognizes violence as a critical community problem that poses significant threats to individuals, families, and the community. The CCR-DSV also recognizes that the power dynamics between the victim/survivor and perpetrator in domestic and sexual violence cases, when viewed through the lens of coercive control, calls for a specialized system of response.

No one individual or entity alone can end domestic violence which is why we are putting out a call to action for all of our community partners to join the Bergen County Coordinated Community Response Team.



To add your agency or organization to the team, complete our **interest form** or scan the QR code with any smart device.

HAVE AN IDEA TO HELP US GROW?

We are constantly looking to transform and improve our programs to benefit survivors and their loved ones in Bergen County. Do you have any **feedback, ideas, or suggestions** for ADV?



Submit your comments anonymously through our confidential [form](#) or scan the QR code with any smart device.

WANT TO STAY IN THE LOOP?

Make sure you are subscribed to **ADV's newsletter and email list** to receive more exciting updates on our agency programs, community events, professional trainings, and opportunities to get involved in the movement to end domestic violence and dating abuse in Bergen County!



Click [here](#) to sign up or scan the QR code with any smart device.

