

Bergen County Department of Human Services

# ALTERNATIVES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NEWSLETTER

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIVISION DIRECTOR

### Empowerment Through Community!

Recognizing the profound impact of domestic violence on our communities is essential in fostering awareness and solidarity. Research indicates that young people exposed to domestic violence are at a heightened risk of replicating or experiencing violence in their own relationships (Schnurr & Lohman, 2008). Alarming, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) reports that children are present during 24% of intimate partner violence incidents, equating to nearly 14,930 cases in New Jersey alone (Smith et al., 2023).

To combat this issue, we must prioritize comprehensive interventions that address not just victims, but the community as a whole. Our commitment to breaking this cycle of violence is unwavering. We invite you to participate in our upcoming educational displays and training opportunities to help empower our youth and foster a culture of respect. Together, let's create a future where every individual feels safe, valued, and heard.

Join us in making a difference!

*Marisa Heluk, M. Ed.*  
ADV Division Director

### *Caring Together: Putting "Community" Back into Communal Wisdom*

Join us as we celebrate powerful collaborations with Bergen County schools and professional programs taking a stand against domestic violence. Through engaging workshops, we place domestic violence at the forefront of community conversations and empower individuals to recognize their ability to influence and shape the lives of victims. By coming together to discuss abuse, we help defuse the shame and stigma, weaken abusers' control, and validate survivors' efforts to resist abuse.



To learn more on how you can reserve a custom educational workshop or professional training for your organization, visit our [website](#) or fill out our [online request form](#).

## AUGUST 2024 IN REVIEW 8TH EDITION HIGHLIGHTS

- ✦ [From Private Pain to Public Discourse: Treating Domestic Violence as a Community Issue](#)
- ✦ [Caring Together: Putting "Community" Back into Communal Wisdom](#)
- ✦ [Educate and Advocate: Prevention Education Programs](#)
- ✦ [Getting Involved: Join our Volunteer Team!](#)
- ✦ [When Fiction Meets Reality: It Ends With Us Film Review](#)
- ✦ [Survivor Resource Spotlight: CHS' Project Child](#)

## FROM PRIVATE PAIN TO PUBLIC DISCOURSE

### *Domestic Violence is a Community Issue*

Domestic violence is often misunderstood as a "private matter," but its consequences extend far beyond the individual victim. It casts a shadow over entire households, impacting children, extended family, friends, and even community members. First responders, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement not only witness the traumatic aftermath, but also experience vicarious trauma as they empathize with those affected.

Media portrayals of domestic violence—whether in news reports or dramatic films—often trigger a surge in calls to hotlines and support services. These narratives resonate with many, reminding individuals of their own experiences or those of loved ones. This response highlights that domestic violence is a pervasive issue that requires collective attention and action.

This month, we invite you to reflect on your personal experiences, the experiences of those around you, and the societal observations that shape our understanding of domestic violence. Together, we can dismantle the frameworks that isolate victims, protect abusers, and disempower bystanders.

By fostering open conversations and challenging the sociocultural narratives surrounding abuse, we can create a supportive community. Let's work together to empower those affected and break the cycle of silence. Domestic violence is not just a personal problem; it harms us all. Every voice matters in addressing this critical issue.



## EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

### Sian Millard

Sian is an integral member of the ADV team, bringing 24 years of dedicated service. She began her career with ADV as a Victim Assistance Counselor, then transitioned to the role of Community Education & Outreach Unit Coordinator. In her current position, Sian continues to support clients as they prepare for their restraining order court appearances, offering essential information and a compassionate ear. She also leads educational sessions for teens in middle schools, high schools, and various community organizations.



A proud graduate of Ramapo College and Montclair State University, Sian holds a Master's Degree in Family Science & Human Development. Outside of her professional commitments, she enjoys traveling, hiking, and kayaking. Additionally, she finds joy in creating stained glass projects. Sian is also a devoted "seeing-eye human" to her beloved orange cat baby, Bubba.

## GETTING INVOLVED

Are you ready to make a difference? Join us in supporting survivors of domestic violence by becoming a volunteer! Your help can provide crucial assistance to survivors calling our hotline or accompany individuals through the court process, showing them that they are not alone. Together, we can empower survivors and help rebuild their lives!

Head over to our [Get Involved](#) page to join our Volunteer Team!



## SAVE THE DATE: WEAR PURPLE DAY

ADV's Annual Wear Purple Day will be held on **Thursday, October 17, 2024, at 5:30pm.**



Join us for a week filled with observance, education, and advocacy opportunities, culminating in our annual ceremony where we will honor the lives of our brave survivors with a resource fair, giveaways, music, and light refreshments.

To RSVP, please fill out the form at the following link: <https://sprw.io/stt-0vfGN>

## SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS/UPDATES

### Educate and Advocate: Prevention Education Programs

ADV offers free, engaging, and customizable workshops for students, educators, and community leaders. Our Prevention Education staff travels throughout Bergen County to middle schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and professional programs, providing in-depth workshops on various topics related to domestic violence.

#### Middle and High School School Communities

Since 2011, the NJ Department of Education has required all 7th-12th grade curriculums to include dating violence education and for school districts to implement policies to prevent and respond to incidents of dating violence. ADV is here to help! Our staff offers educational workshops for students and educators and can consult with administrators on best practices for teen dating violence policies. Workshop topics have included:

##### For students

- Boundaries for Healthy Relationships
- Consent and Red Flags of Abuse
- Positive Peer Leadership

##### For educators & administrators

- Teen Dating Violence 101
- Talking to Teens about TDV
- Coordinated Responses to TDV

We also offer consultation to administrators on best practices for teen dating violence policies and can assist student counselors in identifying referral options for students and families. This includes connecting them with ADV's **Youth Empowerment Program (YEP)**, which provides therapy for youth ages 14 to 21 affected by dating or family violence.

#### College & University Campus Communities

Our college prevention programming addresses the critical issue of dating violence, which is alarmingly common among young adults. We engage students, faculty, staff, and administrators in collaborative efforts to tackle this urgent problem by integrating awareness and prevention strategies into their programming and policies.

Our most popular workshops have included:

- Dating & Domestic Violence
- Popular Culture and Violence
- Tech Abuse & Digital Safety
- Bystander Intervention Training

We also partner with campus leaders and staff to strengthen educational campaigns and outreach efforts through special programming, including town halls, panels, and resource fairs. Together, we can create a safer campus environment for all students!



#### Professional Schools & Training Programs

Our PTE staff conduct comprehensive workshops in professional schools, including medical, nursing, and physician assistant programs, to equip future healthcare professionals with the tools to effectively recognize and support victims of domestic violence. These workshops enhance understanding of domestic violence's complexities, including its prevalence, psychological impact, and the importance of trauma-informed communication and best practices with survivors.

Our holistic presentations incorporate case studies and role-playing scenarios to empower professionals to readily identify signs of domestic violence, assess for risk, and provide vital care and resources to those in need.



To request a workshop, presentation, or our presence at your next resource fair, complete our [online request form](#) or contact [adv@co.bergen.nj.us](mailto:adv@co.bergen.nj.us) with any questions.

## WHEN FICTION MEETS REALITY: IT ENDS WITH US (2024)

Hollywood often shies away from exploring the complexities of domestic violence, tending instead to normalize abuse within romantic narratives—*Twilight*, we’re looking at you! However, the recent film adaptation of Colleen Hoover’s novel, *It Ends With Us*, takes a different approach by directly confronting these themes. Starring Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni, the film follows Lily Bloom as she embarks on a whirlwind romance with Ryle Kincaid, a driven neurosurgeon. As their relationship unfolds, Lily must navigate the intricate dynamics of love while confronting the harsh realities of domestic violence.



Poster for the film *It Ends With Us*. Sony Pictures Digital Productions, Inc., 2024. [www.itendswithus.movie](http://www.itendswithus.movie)

The story delves into Lily’s internal struggle as she balances her feelings for Ryle with the painful truths about abuse, ultimately leading her to make difficult choices for her own safety and well-being. This raises an important question: what did the film get right in its portrayal of these complex issues?

**The Reality of Rising Threats:** The flags of abuse are evident early on in the relationship. Ryle’s initial charm gives way to controlling behavior, such as dictating Lily’s social interactions and becoming possessive. He uses coercive control by oscillating between affection and physical aggression, leaving Lily feeling anxious, like she’s “walking on eggshells,” and confused about how to preserve the relationship. This strategic pattern of intermittent “love-bombing” followed by abuse blurs boundaries, making Lily feel responsible for “triggering” Ryle’s aggression—a manipulation all too familiar to survivors.

**Trauma’s Complicated Impact on Perception:** A major reveal of Ryle’s childhood trauma lends complexity to his character, eliciting Lily’s initial compassion and attempts to understand him. However, as she gains clarity and validating

support from loved ones, she recognizes that his past does not excuse his abusive behaviors. This realization highlights a critical truth: understanding someone’s trauma does not justify their abusive actions.

**Domestic Violence is a VERY Complex Issue:** While the film effectively portrays the heartbreak and loss that survivors face, it somewhat oversimplifies the healing journey by making Lily’s recovery appear quick and neat. In real life, survivors often face the greatest difficulties and safety risks following separation. Additionally, Ryle’s physical aggression in the film upstages problematic power dynamics inherent in their relationship, such as the characters’ age differences, differing financial statuses, and Lily’s isolation from her family and friends.

Every survivor story is unique and in reality, finding resolution and peace tends to be a long and tumultuous journey for survivors who have to scale many barriers to escaping abusive situations, especially when the abusive party capitalizes on their lack of access to key resources, such as safe housing, income, and family support.



Justin Baldoni and Blake Lively in *It Ends With Us*. PHOTO: NICOLE RIVELLI/SONY

Overall, we appreciate the film’s serious portrayal of domestic violence, which serves as a catalyst for important discussions about its complexities. We encourage anyone curious about the topic to watch the film, but advise that the content may be triggering for some viewers and it may not represent all survivor stories. It’s vital to engage in survivor-centered dialogues that not only identify abuse but also explore its emotional impacts and the ongoing challenges faced by survivors.

## SURVIVOR RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

### CENTER FOR HOPE AND SAFETY: PROJECT CHILD

Domestic violence has a profound impact on children, exposing them to an environment that can lead to long-term emotional and psychological trauma. Children who witness domestic violence might experience anxiety, fear, and feelings of helplessness, often resulting in difficulties in forming healthy relationships and developing self-esteem. However, initiatives like Project CHILD aim to provide critical support for these children.

Operated by the **Center for Hope and Safety**, **Project CHILD** strives to build Confidence, Hope, Independence, Love, and Direction for children ages 4-12 who are victims and/or witnesses of domestic violence. The program offers:

- Weekly individual and group therapeutic treatment
- Creative arts therapy
- Transportation to and from the location
- Case management
- Parent support groups
- Financial assistance for child care and summer camps

Through these comprehensive services, Project CHILD helps children overcome the trauma of domestic violence and foster a brighter future.

To connect with staff at **Project Child**, call **201-300-6666**. To contact **Center for Hope and Safety**, call the **24/7 Confidential Hotline: 201-498-9247**.



12 Overlook Avenue, Suite A  
Rochelle Park, NJ 07662  
(201) 498-9247  
[info@hopeandsafetynj.org](mailto:info@hopeandsafetynj.org)  
<https://www.hopeandsafetynj.org/>



# WEAR PURPLE DAY LUNCH & LEARN SERIES

Are you ready to make a difference in the lives of survivors of domestic violence?

October is **Domestic Violence Awareness Month!** Join us for discussions on the latest buzzwords around abusive relationships, the pressing issue of teen dating abuse, and the power of bystander intervention. Enjoy your lunch with your coworkers while gaining valuable insights and tools to support survivors and promote a safer, more compassionate community.

**1** TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024, 12:15-1:00PM  
*Gaslighting, Narcissism, and Toxic Relationships, Oh My!*

While these terms have been around for some time, they have now become buzzwords to describe a range of behaviors in relationships. But what do they really mean? How can we recognize the real signs of abusive behaviors?

Join us as we dive deeper into the most popular relationship buzzwords out there: love-bombing, gaslighting, "fauxpologies," narcissism, and more! ADV staff will explore definitions, debunk myths, and provide you with the tell-tale signs of relationship abuse!

**2** WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024, 12:15-1:00PM  
*Teen Relationship Issues? Let's Talk About It!*

Teenage love can be an intense emotional experience with many ups and downs. While it's normal for teens to feel excited, nervous, or overwhelmed by the thought of dating, they are at high risk of encountering unhealthy or abusive behaviors for the first time during their teen years.

This workshop is intended to help prepare participants to recognize the signs of dating abuse and how to navigate tricky conversations about love and dating with teens. Join us as we talk about the challenges of keeping the lines of communication open and thinking of ways to empower youth to think critically within relationships!

**3** FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024, 12:15-1:00PM  
*The Art of Positive Bystander Intervention*

Whether it's standing up to abuse, bullying, defusing conflict, or offering support to someone in need, every moment counts. Join us as we explore the 5D's and our safe options to intervene in several types of real-life scenarios. The 5D's are a practical tool anyone can use to make a positive impact on others where it matters most!

Discover your personal and professional power to make our communities safer! Join us for an empowering, interactive workshop where participants will learn the art of positive bystander intervention through the dynamic 5D's Approach.

READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

ATTEND IN-PERSON OR VIRTUALLY

EARN A CHANCE TO WIN COOL PRIZES!

RSVP OR  
HERE Scan the  
QR Code:



4th Floor Learning Center  
One Bergen County Plaza  
Hackensack, NJ 07601

Need to tune in virtually?  
Go to [www.zoom.us/join](https://www.zoom.us/join)  
Meeting ID: 898 7590 8246  
Passcode: 696494

OR  
Scan the  
QR Code:



Participating in Wear Purple Day advocacy activities earns you the chance to win prizes and giveaways. Don't forget to attend our Wear Purple Day Ceremony for extra chances to win!



## 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.



## 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.

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

