



2024 Impact Report

The Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence advocates for the right of all people to live free from domestic abuse and all forms of violence.

Advocate Initiated Contact: A Strategy Built on Trust and Collaboration

Most people helped by one of MCEDV's regional Domestic Violence Resource Centers (DVRCs) will connect with advocates by making a call to the helpline. Others will first hear from an advocate who calls them, in a process called **Advocate Initiated Contact**, which occurs when a trusted community partner has let us know that there's someone in our community who might need our help.

The four key ingredients that enable our network to safely initiate contact with survivors are:

- building and maintaining trusting relationships with community partners,
- creating appropriate and reliable pathways for information sharing that align with our confidentiality obligations,
- establishing clear roles and responsibilities, and
- consistently integrating advocates within the fabric of the communities that they serve.

Last year, 3,758 survivors that regional DVRCs helped were reached through Advocate Initiated Contact, representing 30% of all survivors who worked with these programs in 2023.

Community Partnerships that Support Advocate Initiated Contact:

- **Law Enforcement:** Law Enforcement agencies have shared DV related arrest reports with their DVRCs for years, a practice MCEDV helped codify into state law.* To support that law's implementation, MCEDV worked with Maine State Police to create a statewide information sharing policy. Advocates use this information to safely initiate a call to the crime victim, creating an entry point for them to begin accessing a wide range of services and supports. Many DVRCs and local law enforcement agencies have similar arrangements.

- **Courts:** Every year, thousands of survivors call the helpline before starting the Protection from Abuse (PFA) process. Sometimes, survivors start that journey at the courthouse without having talked with an advocate. Most District Courts regularly share information about temporary orders and plaintiff contact information with the DVRCs, who can then initiate contact to provide information about what to expect during the final hearing, offer support through the rest of the process, and connect them to legal representation where available. MCEDV works with the Maine Judicial Branch to support the critical role of advocates in helping survivors navigate these civil proceedings.
- **Child Protective Services:** For more than two decades, MCEDV has coordinated the Domestic Violence-Child Protective Services (DV-CPS) Program in collaboration with the DHHS Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), assigning advocates to collaborate with the regional OCFS offices to provide resources and support for child welfare involved families and consultation for caseworkers. In 2022/23, MCEDV participated in an extensive revision and rollout of the OCFS Domestic Abuse and Violence Policy, which reinforces information sharing and referral procedures from OCFS caseworkers to advocates for all cases that may involve domestic abuse.
- **Certified Domestic Violence Intervention Programs (CDVIPs):** CDVIPs in Maine send safe contact information for the partners of CDVIP participants to the regional DVRCs. Advocates contact these partners directly to discuss CDVIP and the range of available advocacy services and community resources, ensuring survivors have support while their current or former partner addresses the beliefs that led to their abusive actions. MCEDV provides ongoing training, support, monitoring, and coordination for Maine’s CDVIPs and their victim advocacy partners to make this information sharing effective.

FACT:
Through this program, dedicated CPS Liaison advocates initiate contacts to over **1,000 individuals** who are parenting through abuse and navigating the child welfare system each year.

Advocate Initiated Contact is an essential part of how communities across Maine work together to ensure survivors have low barrier, trauma-responsive, and timely access to reliable resources and critical services. During a time of crisis, a call from an advocate who is well positioned to help navigate confusing systems and time-sensitive tasks can reduce the pressure and fear of the unknown.

Though advocates statewide can be reached through the helpline 24/7, Advocate Initiated Contact, made possible through our network’s deep and longstanding partnerships in communities across Maine, has become integral to successfully meeting the needs of survivors of domestic abuse and their children throughout our state.



In 2023, DVRC advocates helped **15,147** people across Maine. **12,706** were directly affected by domestic abuse and violence. **50%** of survivors had at least one child in the home.

Rapid Rehousing Program for Survivors and their Families

For many survivors, obtaining safe and stable housing while leaving an abusive partner can be incredibly difficult. To help, last year MCEDV launched the Rapid Rehousing Program (RRH), funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which provides survivors with rental assistance for 12 months.

Survivors in the program also receive assistance with moving costs, groceries, transportation, and utilities. This program has also funded additional staffing to provide housing navigation and related services to survivors in their communities at DVRCs in Maine's most rural communities.

The RRH program is currently helping 16 households – which includes 33 children – establish new, safe homes, by providing financial assistance



Average rent
cost for program
participants:
\$1,513/month

and advocacy services to help them maintain long-term housing stability.

Beginning a new path forward and establishing a new routine amidst life's complexities can be very challenging, and for survivors of domestic violence, that challenge is tenfold. This program gives survivors an opportunity to find a new home quickly so that they can continue healing and move toward long-term safety. Survivors who participate in the Rapid Rehousing Program have ongoing advocacy available from the DVRC they are working with during and after the 12-month period.

ODARA Risk Assessment Research Study

The Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment – known as ODARA – is an evidence-based tool that predicts the likelihood of a domestic violence offender assaulting a partner again within the next five years. Since 2012, the tool has been used by Maine's criminal legal system to help inform decisions about accountability for offenders.

Through its work with the Maine Commission on Domestic and Sexual Abuse, MCEDV collaborated with researchers from Arizona State University to coordinate Maine's participation in a rigorous multi-year, multi-state validation study. The big question the research sought to answer: Is ODARA valid in Maine? The answer is **yes** – with ODARA particularly good at predicting future **felony-level domestic violence recidivism**.

MCEDV is using the Maine ODARA validation study results to help implement recommendations from the 13th Report of the Maine Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel*, including:

- Increase prosecution attention on high-risk offenders, including when prosecuting repeat cases involving the same people.
- Identify high-risk offenders through the ODARA, along with consideration of known lethality indicators, including non-fatal strangulation, stalking, and suicidality.
- Use ODARA as one of the considerations in determining whether to use deferred disposition.

*Available at mcedv.org/publications

Supporting Our Membership

Core to our work is supporting our membership as they work in communities across Maine to support people affected by domestic violence, and to improve the ways communities and institutions respond to abuse. When surveyed about the assistance we provide to advocates, here's some of what they had to say:



"Timely and thorough responses. MCEDV genuinely wants to be supportive."

"I am so grateful for all the MCEDV folks I've had the pleasure to work with! I have found them all to be knowledgeable, trauma-informed, supportive and resourceful. They have been skilled at thinking outside of the box, researching to offer the best support possible, and taking my concerns or questions seriously."



"I am so thankful for all of MCEDV's tireless support in securing continued funding for all member programs in the face of VOCA cuts."



"Responsive, knowledgeable, a true partner in this work!"

Join the Movement - Stay Informed and Connected

Check out our 2023 Data Dashboard* to learn more about our statewide work and the community-based services provided by advocates at Maine's regional Domestic Violence Resource Centers.

Become a Supporter Today!

- ✓ Help survivors who are on the path to independence and freedom from abuse by giving to the Liberation Fund.
- ✓ Contribute to the Nancy Gentile Endowment and help ensure long-term sustainability and the flexibility to respond to emerging needs.
- ✓ Provide general support and help us bring the lived experiences of survivors to the tables where laws, policies, and practices that impact survivors and their families are being developed.

Visit
mcedv.org/donate

to give online.

Send a check to:

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