

20 Year Report

Domestic Violence
Coordinating Council



1993-2013

From Our Chair

In 1993, Delaware was the only state in the country that did not offer victims of domestic violence the ability to petition the court for a protection from abuse order. Although advocates had long been assisting victims through domestic violence shelter programs and services, significant gaps existed in Delaware's response to domestic violence.

In March 1993, Delaware sent a team of representatives to the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Conference in San Francisco, which focused on confronting family violence. During that conference the concept of Delaware's Domestic Violence Coordinating Council was developed. After returning from the conference, the team along with members of the Domestic Violence Task Force developed a report for the Delaware General Assembly, recommending, among other things, the creation of a statewide coordinating council. In response to those recommendations, four pieces of legislation were passed in 1993, including Delaware's Protection From Abuse Statute and the statute establishing the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.

The first meeting of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) was held on September 15, 1993. In attendance at that meeting were the DVCC founding members; Honorable Vincent J. Poppiti, Honorable Liane Sorenson, Honorable Charles M. Oberly, Honorable Lawrence M. Sullivan, Honorable Karen Johnson, Thomas P. Gordon, Mary Davis, Dr. Anne Aldridge, Dr. Rhoslyn Bishoff, Cynthia Boehmer and myself, Patti Blevins.

The founding members included representatives from the advocacy community, law enforcement, the state attorney general, the courts, cabinet members, state legislators, the state public defenders office, and the medical community. At our first meeting we reviewed agency purpose, formulated eight subcommittees, discussed By-laws and the members agreed that to be effective, we would need to reach out to agencies involved in the system response and invite them to join us at the table.

Since that first meeting on September 15, 1993, much has been accomplished. We thank all the members of the community who, over the past twenty years, have informed us guided us and worked with us to improve Delaware's response to domestic violence.



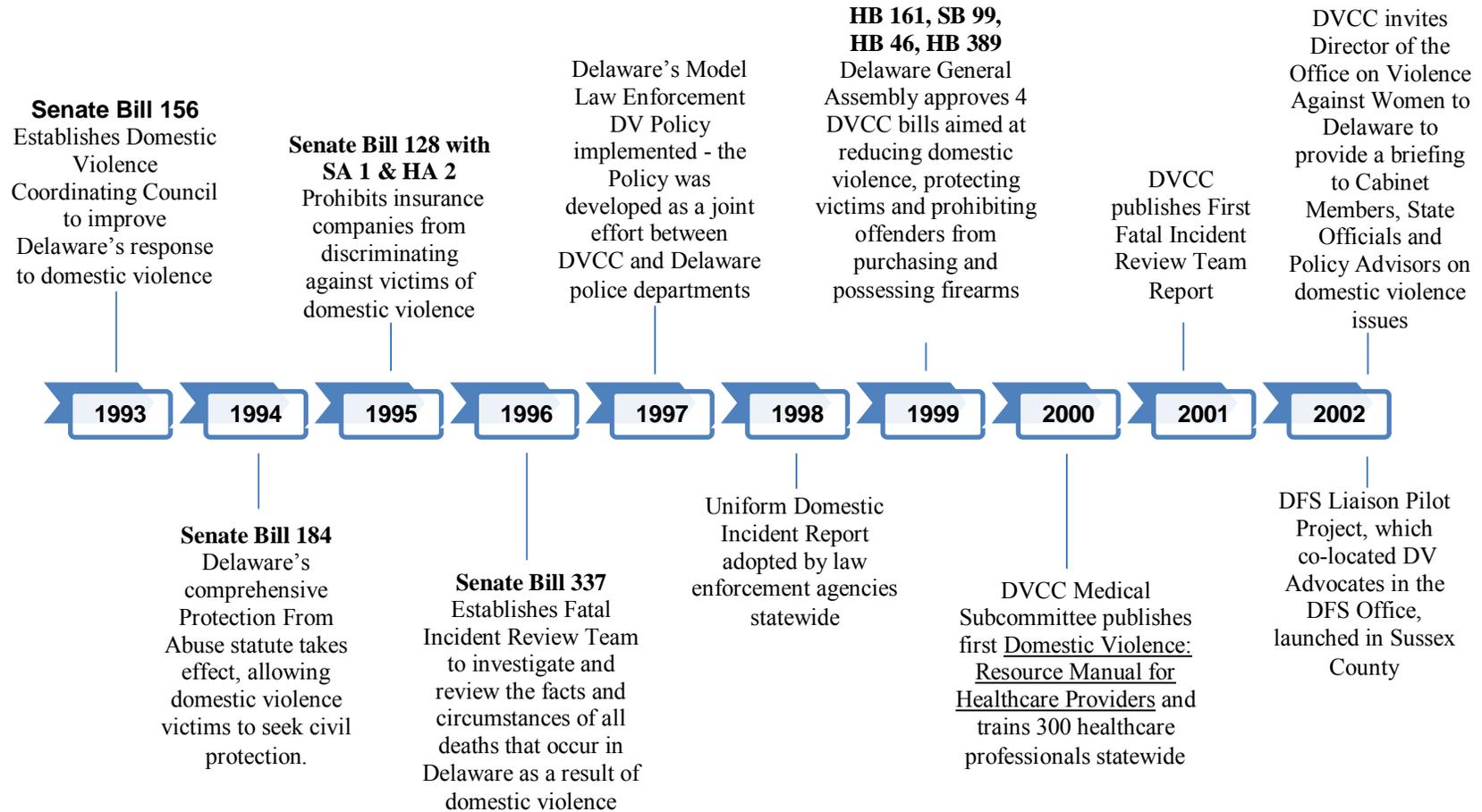
Hon. Patricia M. Blevins
State Senate
Council Chair

Table of Contents

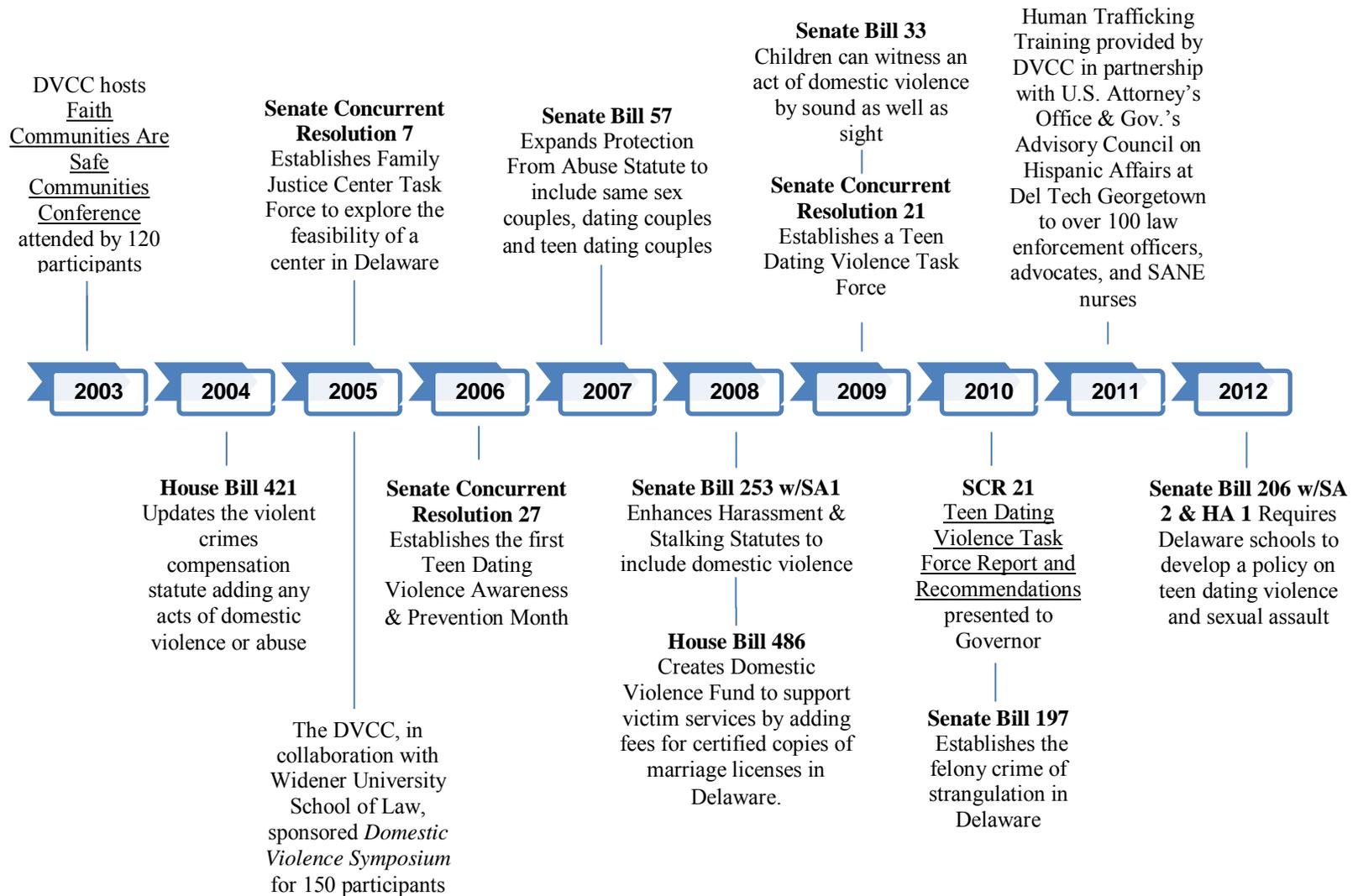
DVCC Timeline	2
Domestic Violence Coordinating Council	4
Enhancing Victim Safety	5
Children & Domestic Violence	8
Fatal Incident Review Team	11
DVCC's Enabling Legislation	13
DVCC Legislative Initiatives	14

Patricia Blevins

20 Year Highlights



20 Year Highlights



Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council is a State agency legislatively created in 1993 to improve Delaware's response to domestic violence. Much of the DVCC's work is accomplished through Subcommittees comprised of Council members, staff, advocates, law enforcement, prosecutors, service providers, and community members. The diverse membership of DVCC Subcommittees allows for greater input on domestic violence issues. The focus of the Subcommittees is: to collaboratively, uniformly and continuously review the system response to domestic violence; to identify and prioritize system issues; and to develop plans and goals to address system issues. This process leads to improvements to the system through policy development and when needed, legislative change.

Delaware Code, Title 13, Domestic Relations, Chapter 21

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council:

- Studies court services and procedures, law enforcement procedures and protocol, and criminal justice data collection and analysis, as it relates to domestic violence.
- Effectually coordinates among agencies, departments, and the courts with victims of domestic violence and abuse.
- Promotes effective prevention, intervention, and treatment techniques based upon research and data collection.
- Recommends standards for treatment programs for perpetrators of domestic violence to the Department of Health and Social Services; Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families; and the Department of Correction.
- Reviews, drafts and comments upon legislation relating to domestic violence introduced in the General Assembly at the request of any member of the General Assembly or on its own initiative; and
- Improves the response to domestic violence and abuse to reduce the incidents thereof.

The Mission of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council is to reduce the occurrence of domestic violence and abuse in all its forms.

Domestic Violence Coordinating Council Membership

- Chief Judge of Family Court
- Two members of the House of Representatives (one from each caucus)
- Two members of the Senate (one from each caucus)
- Attorney General
- Public Defender
- Secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security
- Representative of the law enforcement community
- At-Large member representing victims of domestic violence
- Representative of the health care community
- President Judge of Superior Court
- Commissioner of the Department of Correction
- Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
- Four at-large members
- At-Large member representing victims of sexual assault
- Representative of the Court of Common Pleas

Membership established by statute Title 13, Chapter 21 §2102

Enhancing Victim Safety & Protection

Enhancing victim safety has always been the highest priority of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. With the creation of the DVCC in 1993 came the passage of Delaware’s Protection From Abuse statute and the beginning of a multitude of DVCC initiatives designed to increase the safety of domestic violence victims and their families through increased collaboration and enhanced system response.

Firearms

Firearms pose a particular threat to victims of domestic violence. Data collected by the DVCC Fatal Incident Review Team from 1996-2012 shows that in 52% of the intimate partner homicides reviewed by the team, the deaths

were caused by a firearm. The DVCC had always been concerned about the increased danger to victims when firearms are present in the home. A series of shootings in 1998 and early 1999 led the DVCC to draft legislation to prohibit any individual with a Protection From Abuse Order against them or any individual convicted of certain domestic violence misdemeanor offenses from possessing or purchasing a firearm.

A coordinated effort was launched by the DVCC in conjunction with Domestic Violence Task Force, community leaders, advocates and agencies to support passage of the bill. A press conference was held on February 17, 1999 to announce the Domestic Violence Firearms Legislation (House Bill 71). On April 20, 1999, over 50 advocates, service providers, and other supporters were present for the on debate on **House Bill 161** (formerly HB 71) at Legislative Hall. Through the leadership of the DVCC members in the House and the Senate and the support of the advocacy community, the DVCC firearms legislation was passed.



Delaware enacts Protection From Abuse Statute

In 1993, Delaware was the last state to enact a civil protection option for victims of domestic violence. Delaware used the experience of other states to draft a statute that offers broad relief to victims and their families.

BENCHMARK

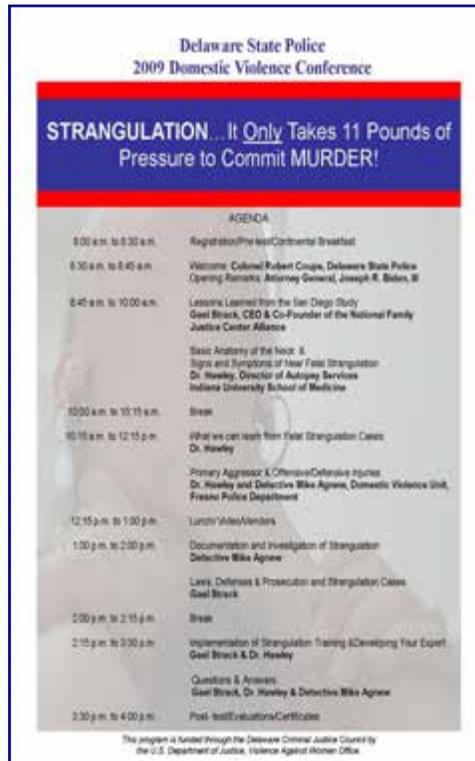
In The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence’s 2012 publication, [Gun Laws Matter 2012: Understanding the Link between Weak Laws and Gun Violence](#), the Law Center ranked each state, from strongest to weakest, based on a review of state laws in 29 different firearms-related policy areas. Delaware ranked 11th out of 50 states for its gun violence prevention laws.

Enhancing Victim Safety & Protection

Strangulation

In July 2009, two Delaware State Police Detectives provided a presentation to the DVCC Criminal Justice Subcommittee on the topic of strangulation. The purpose of the presentation was to highlight the fact that Delaware had no strangulation law. Following their attendance at a conference in California, the Detectives researched how crimes with the elements of strangulation were typically charged in Delaware. They found that most of the time, the cases were charged as Offensive Touching or Third Degree Assault, both misdemeanors. They identified that these cases were routinely under-investigated and emphasized that the lack of a standalone felony crime of strangulation was at the root of the problem. Law enforcement could not charge the crime appropriately if there was not an applicable charge to bring against the offender.

Strangulation is a significant risk factor for attempted or completed homicide by an intimate partner. Despite the intense peril to victims, strangulation was long overlooked as a crime and was widely referred to as “choking”, minimizing its high risk for lethality, serious injury, and long-lasting emotional trauma. When a person is strangled, it is not uncommon for there to be no visible injuries. However, these invisible injuries can be so severe as to cause the victim’s death several days later. Strangulation can cause neurological problems, paralysis, miscarriage, mental health problems, pain, insomnia and vision changes.



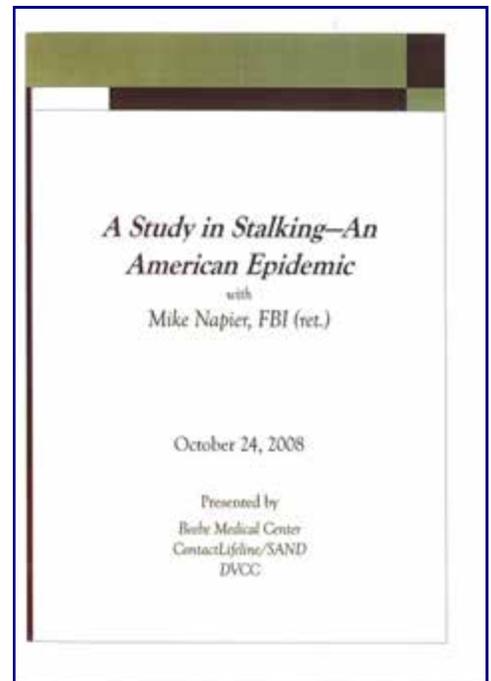
Another aspect of the problem was the need to educate the police about the lethality and seriousness of the offense. As a result, the DVCC Law Enforcement Training Workgroup, in collaboration with the Delaware State Police, hosted the annual Domestic Violence Conference entitled Strangulation... It Only Takes 11 Pounds of Pressure to Commit Murder. Over 200 were in attendance. The conference reinforced the need to recognize strangulation and investigate it thoroughly.

The DVCC Legislative Subcommittee drafted **SB 197** and in 2010, Delaware became the 19th state to make strangulation a standalone felony offense.

Stalking

Stalking is a distinctive form of criminal activity composed of a series of actions that, if taken individually, might constitute legal behavior. Prior to the passage of stalking laws, police and prosecutors often felt they were unable to adequately assist victims threatened by a stalker. The DVCC, in cooperation with the Victims’ Rights Task Force, sought to strengthen Delaware’s stalking and harassment statutes by drafting legislation designed to better protect victims.

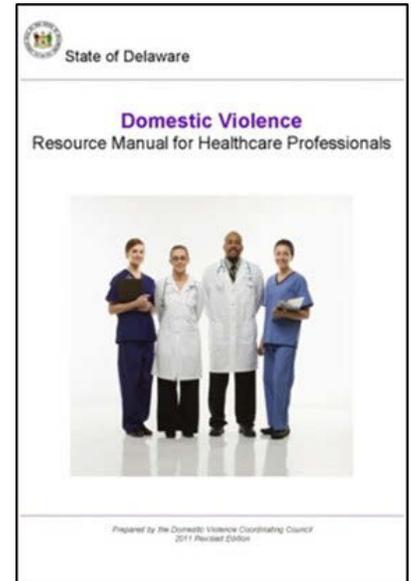
SB 253 w/SA 1 was signed on 6/30/2008. Following passage of the Stalking Bill, the DVCC collaborated with Beebe Hospital and ContactLifeline to sponsor a statewide Stalking Conference on October 24, 2008 in Lewes, Delaware. A follow-up conference, Delaware’s Coordinated Response to Stalking, was held in November 2008.



Domestic Violence Resource Manual for Healthcare Professionals

The DVCC Medical Subcommittee has developed best practices and trained healthcare professionals to help them better respond to patients who are experiencing domestic violence. In 2000, the DVCC collaborated with the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence to develop and release Domestic Violence: A Resource Manual for Healthcare Providers for the State of Delaware, which endorsed universal screening and provided information about

resources for victims. Over 300 physicians and nurses statewide were trained in this effort. The Medical Subcommittee later developed and released its revised Domestic Violence Resource Manual for Healthcare Professionals and provides CEU-approved domestic violence training which includes information about the use of the manual to healthcare professionals statewide.



DVCC Medical Subcommittee members mark the release of the Resource Manual for Healthcare Professionals at a press conference at Christiana Care Hospital Newark campus.

Domestic Violence Intervention Treatment Standards

The DVCC Treatment Subcommittee in collaboration with Delaware Treatment Program Directors developed the Domestic Violence Intervention Standards. Treatment standards hold domestic violence offenders accountable for their behavior, teach new skills using a model of violence free behavior and promote consistency of intervention standards statewide. Ensuring the quality and effectiveness of offender treatment is essential to promoting violence free behavior and enhancing

victim safety. One of the DVCC's most important roles has been to develop the Domestic Violence Intervention Standards in order to regulate offender treatment services.

The initial Domestic Violence Intervention Standards were implemented in 1999. Intervention Standards mandate specific credentials, education and training for treatment service providers as well as outlining the components required for program content.

Each year, the DVCC Domestic Violence Intervention Certification Panel reviews applications from treatment providers who request to become certified as DVCC approved providers. Delaware's Judges and Commissioners' direct offenders exclusively to the DVCC certified treatment programs. Currently, there are five certified providers statewide.

Children & Domestic Violence

In light of the severe, long lasting social, psychological and physical health repercussions of children exposed to domestic violence, the issue of children exposed to domestic violence was adopted as an agency focus for the DVCC in 2006. The Children and DV Subcommittee has been at the forefront of Delaware’s efforts to support initiatives that safeguard children from the emotional and physical harm by domestic violence. The DVCC’s efforts to improve Delaware’s response to children and teens affected by domestic violence include legislation, education and community awareness.

Domestic Violence Liaison Project

In May 2000, the DVCC Children and DV Subcommittee identified the emerging need for services for domestic violence victims who had become involved with Division of Family Services (DFS). At the time, the needs of adult DV victims often seemed to conflict with those of their children. Sometimes these victims were accused of failing to protect their children from the perpetrator’s violence. The Subcommittee developed and promoted the concept of co-locating domestic violence advocates within the DFS offices. The goal of the project would be to improve the quality of services provided to DFS-involved victims of domestic

violence which would increase safety for victims and their children. The Subcommittee facilitated collaboration between DFS and service providers, which resulted in a new statewide program to help victims. This DV Liaison Project was piloted in Sussex County in January 2002. Currently, there are five DV Liaisons including one bi-lingual liaison co-located in five DFS offices statewide. Victims receive assistance from DV Liaisons with safety planning, legal and social service advocacy, counseling, and connections to resources. Over 2500 victims have received help from DV Liaisons since the project began.

Child Witnessing

The DVCC, in conjunction with CHILD Inc., hosted a conference for over 200 participants entitled, “In the Best Interest of the Child” with keynote speaker Dr. Jeffrey Edleson, a leading authority on child-witnessing of domestic violence.

The DVCC Legislative Subcommittee drafted **SB 33** which strengthened Delaware’s

Supervised Visitation Centers

Due to the high risk of violence during the exchange of children in families with a history of domestic violence, a Supervised Visitation Center Workgroup was established in 1994. A yearlong study resulted in the recommendation to create family visitation centers in Delaware. The DVCC took the lead in coordinating the efforts and Delaware’s first Visitation Center was opened in 1995. Currently, there are five Family Visitation Centers that provide safe exchange services and on-site monitoring of visits in cases with a history of domestic violence.

Endangering the Welfare of a Child statute by qualifying that children can witness acts of domestic violence by sight as well as sound. Children do not need to see the crime to be significantly impacted by it. SB 33 passed on 5/12/2009.

SAVE THE DATE
“In The Best Interest of the Child”
Lecture Event
October 30, 2007, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
The Waterfall Banquet & Conference Center
3418 Philadelphia Pike, Claymont, Delaware

Sponsored By: CHILD, Inc.
In collaboration with
The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

This training provides 6.5 contact hrs and has been approved by the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC Provider #1012) through the Delaware Mental Health Counselors Assn., State Chapter of the American Mental Health Counselors Assn., an approved NBCC provider, nursing crisis, DHS, CLE, and crisis for psychologists, American Academy of Counseling Psychology (AACOP).

FEATURING DR. JEFFREY EDELSON,
one of the world’s leading authorities on children exposed to domestic violence.

Registration details on CHILD, Inc. website: www.childinc.com

HIGHLIGHTS

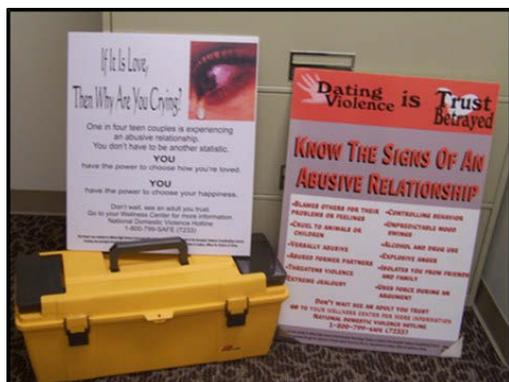
- ◊ Response, Intervention, and Treatment in Child Witnessing Domestic Violence Cases
- ◊ Mental Health and Legal Issues in Child Custody Cases
- ◊ Panel Discussions with DE experts in Child Witnessing, Child Mental Health, and Legal Professionals

Teen Dating Violence

“You have got to start young...talk about relationships and respect.”
Delaware Teen

In September 2006, the DVCC Downstate Committee in conjunction with the DVCC Public Awareness and Education Subcommittee began a Teen Dating Violence Project with Milford High School. The project engaged teens in creating outreach and education materials. Thirty-three “Toolkits” containing resource manuals, hotline numbers and copies of posters and brochures developed by teens were distributed to Wellness Centers in every high school. Students also developed public service announcements that aired on local radio stations during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The grant-supported student public awareness campaign included the student art work displayed on 30 buses statewide.

Addressing the needs of youth affected by teen dating violence and



sexual assault has been a focus of the DVCC’s effort to promote healthy teen relationships. Expanding civil legal protection to teen dating couples, educating youth about dating violence and sexual assault,

raising awareness about healthy relationships, and resources available to assist teens are some ways the DVCC has sought to address teen dating violence.



Student Bus Campaign

Civil legal protection for teens in abusive dating relationships became a reality when they were added to the category of persons eligible to obtain protection under Delaware’s PFA statute when SB 57 passed on 6/5/2007. This landmark DVCC bill made PFAs available to same sex and dating couples in substantive relationships, expanding the option of a PFA to many who needed its protection.

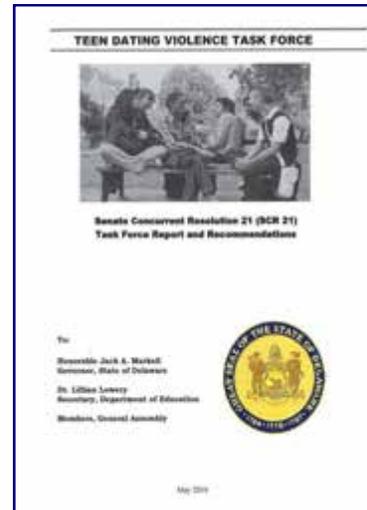
Delaware’s two Domestic Violence Hotlines were the only resources for youth to seek help with domestic violence. In 2006, the DVCC conducted trainings statewide for Domestic Violence Hotline Counselors on the topic of teen dating violence, offering information about how to communicate with teens, age-appropriate resources, and domestic violence dynamics in teen relationships.

Teen Dating Violence Task Force

In 2009, the DVCC Legislative Subcommittee drafted Senate Concurrent Resolution 21 to establish a Teen Dating Violence Task Force to evaluate and make recommendations on policies for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Education in Delaware. The Task Force wanted teen input. Consequently, teen focus groups were established throughout the State to inform the Task Force from a youth perspective. The Teen Dating Violence Task Force Report and Recommendations were submitted to the Governor, Secretary of Education, and the General Assembly in May of 2010. The detailed report recommended policy development and creation of

guidelines for schools in responding to domestic violence, formation of teen peer groups, training in domestic violence for schools, addition of teen dating violence to schools' Codes of Conduct, and the addition of healthy relationships curricula in schools. The DVCC collaborated with the Department of Education to draft legislation requiring school districts and charter schools to establish policies on responding to Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Assault, including guidelines on mandatory reporting and confidentiality, a protocol for responding to incidents of Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Assault and training on the issues. School districts and charter schools must also

include comprehensive healthy relationships programming as part of student health classes. **SB 206** w/SA 2 & HA 1, also known as the Liane Sorenson Act, was signed on 7/20/2012.



[Guidelines for Responding to Teen Dating and Sexual Violence in Delaware Schools](#) was developed by a workgroup of the Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC) Abuse Intervention Committee. This document was completed in May 2012 and provides guidelines to Delaware schools for responding to teen dating and sexual violence and references the applicable laws and statutes. It provides schools a blueprint for creating a comprehensive and effective response to violence and/or abuse. It also contains information about mandatory reporting of child abuse, neglect, unlawful sexual contact with minors, and threats of harm to self or others. The DVCC and CPAC provided the first training on the Guidelines to approximately 75 school counselors in October 2012.

Adolescent Treatment Standards

Domestic Violence Intervention Standards for Juvenile Offenders were developed by the DVCC Treatment Subcommittee in 2010. These Adolescent Intervention Standards, developed by the DVCC, were created to promote best practices and consistency of intervention for programs working with

adolescent offenders. This was a need because of differences in best practice treatment modalities between teen and adult offenders. Adolescent Standards hold offenders accountable, examine beliefs about relationships, challenge attitudes, teach new skills, monitor behavior and report compliance to the courts and probation.

BENCHMARK

According to the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, Delaware was the first state to develop Adolescent Treatment Standards.

Fatal Incident Review Team (FIRT)

The primary purpose of reviewing domestic violence fatalities and near-fatalities is to decrease the incidence of such deaths and near-deaths. By conducting system audits of state agencies and private organizations which had contact with the deceased individual or perpetrator, the system's response to domestic violence can be improved. Steps may be taken to prevent future deaths, including changes in organizations' policies and procedures and dissemination of information for intervention, prevention, public policy

development, and education. Trends and patterns of domestic violence deaths can be examined and high risk factors can be identified. FIRT has the statutory authority to investigate and review the facts and circumstances of all deaths and near-deaths that occur in Delaware as a result of domestic violence. Cases involving the death of a minor related to domestic violence are reviewed jointly by the regional panel of the Child Death, Near Death and Stillborn Commission and FIRT.



Senate Bill 337 was passed on June 27, 1996, amending Title 13 of the Delaware Code, giving the DVCC the authority to create a Fatal Incident Review Team.



2009 legislation enhanced FIRT's ability to effect system change by allowing Delaware's Team to review near-death cases. Through victim interviews, more information is revealed about the details of the incident and what led up to it, as well as the victim's perceptions of the system and the system's response.

BENCHMARK
<p>Delaware's Fatal Incident Review Team became the first statewide team in the country when it was created by statute in 1996.</p>

Fatal Incident Review Team Members

- Co-chaired by 3 members of the Coordinating Council to be elected by the Council
- Attorney General or the Attorney General's designee
- Director of the Division of Family Services or the Director's designee
- Victim advocate appointed by the Council
- Chief Judge of the Family Court or the Chief Judge's designee
- Chief Magistrate of the Justice of the Peace Courts or the Chief Magistrate's designee
- Director of the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health or the Director's designee
- Law Enforcement officer to be appointed by the Delaware Chiefs of Police Council

Membership established by statute Title 13 Chapter 21 §2105

Every recommendation issued by FIRT is an opportunity for Delaware to realize meaningful change that will impact domestic violence. Some significant recommendations made and outcomes achieved since the team's inception include the following:

2001 FIRT Report—Employers should receive information on how to make the workplace a safer place for victims, including providing victims with referral information.
Outcome: The Governor, in collaboration with the DVCC, sponsored a training for Cabinet Members, Agency Directors and Policy Advisors on Delaware's coordinated response, domestic violence dynamics and resources. Diane Stuart, the Director of the U.S. Office on Violence Against Women was the featured presenter in April 2002.

2001 FIRT Report—Ongoing public awareness should be provided on the danger and dynamics of abusive relationships with emphasis on the resources, which are available to assist victims in safely ending the violence.
Outcome: Copies of the DVCC Safety Plan Brochure were distributed to 37,000 State of Delaware employees enclosed in their paychecks in October of 2002.

2007 FIRT Report—The DVCC should contact the Director of State Personnel about developing a State policy on violence in the workplace.

Outcome: The State of Delaware Workplace Violence Policy was revised to address domestic violence issues. In 2010, the DVCC provided assistance to the Governor's Office in developing a separate policy specific to domestic violence for State employees.

2007 FIRT Report—The DVCC Legislative Subcommittee should amend the PFA Statute to expand members of protected classes to include same-sex intimate partner relationships and those dating relationships not currently covered by the PFA statute.

Outcome: **SB 57**, which passed in 2007, amended the definition of parties protected to dating relationships and same sex relationships.

2008 FIRT Report—The DVCC Legislative Subcommittee should review the Endangering the Welfare of a Child statute in regards to the definition of witness.

Outcome: The subcommittee drafted **SB 33**, which qualified that children can witness an act of domestic violence by sound as well as sight, acknowledging that a child may have only heard the violent act from another room, but nonetheless be a witness who is emotionally impacted by it. Signed 5/12/09.

2009 FIRT Report—The DVCC should provide education to all Judges and Commissioners as it relates to DV offenders who violate probation.

Outcome: The DVCC worked with the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide this 2010 statewide CLE-approved judicial domestic violence training, attended by 225 individuals, including 55 judges and commissioners.

BENCHMARK

According to the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative, there are currently 175 teams operating in 41 states in the U.S. Statewide teams now exist in eleven states, including Delaware.

SUPPORT

SB 57
EVERYONE

DESERVES
PROTECTION

FROM
ABUSE!

Fatality review teams are often regarded as the final component that completes a coordinated system response to domestic violence. Once changes have been made to better the system, the fatality review process serves to identify new breakdowns and areas of need.

CHAPTER 159
FORMERLY
SENATE BILL NO. 156

AS AMENDED BY HOUSE AMENDMENT NO. 1

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 13 OF THE DELAWARE CODE CREATING A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

Section 1. Amend Title 13 of the Delaware Code, by adding a new Chapter, designated as Chapter 21, which new Chapter shall read as follows:

"CHAPTER 21. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL. §2101. Creation.

The General Assembly hereby creates a permanent Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.

§2102. Composition.

The Council shall consist of 11 members as follows:

- (1) The Chief Judge of the Family Court;
- (2) One member of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- (3) One member of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate;
- (4) The Attorney General;
- (5) The Public Defender;
- (6) A Cabinet level official designated by the Governor;
- (7) A representative of the Law Enforcement Community appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety;
- (8) The Chairperson of the Domestic Violence Task Force of the Delaware Commission for Women;
- (9) A board certified family-practice physician licensed to practice in this State, appointed by the Board of Medical Practice;

(1) An at-large member representing the advocacy community appointed by the Commission on Family Law; and

(2) An at-large member elected by the Council members at the first meeting of each calendar year;

§2103. Purpose; powers; duties. The Council shall:

(1) Continuously study Court services and procedures, Law Enforcement procedures and protocol, and criminal justice data collection and analysis as it relates to domestic violence;

(1) Effectuate coordination between agencies, departments and the courts with victims of domestic violence and abuse;

(1) Promote effective prevention, intervention and treatment techniques which will be developed based upon research and data collection;

(1) Recommend standards for treatment programs for perpetrators of domestic violence to the Department of Health and Social Services,

Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, Department of Correction;

(5) Review and comment upon legislation relating to domestic violence introduced in the General Assembly at the request of any member of the General Assembly or on its own initiative; and

(6) Improve the response to domestic violence and abuse so as to reduce the incidents thereof.

§2104. Meetings; quorum; officers; committees; procedure.

(a) The Council shall meet at least 4 times per year. Six members shall constitute a quorum.

(b) The Chairperson shall have the duty to convene and preside over meetings of the Council and prepare an agenda for meetings.

(c) The Chief Judge of the Family Court shall convene the initial meeting of the Council.

(d) At the initial meeting of the Council a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall be elected by the Council members. Thereafter, in

December of each year, the Council shall elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. The Vice-Chairperson's duty shall be to act as

chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson.

(e) The Council shall establish committees composed of Council members and other knowledgeable individuals, as it deems advisable, to assist in planning, policy, goal and priority recommendations, and developing implementation plans to achieve the purposes of the Council.

(f) The Council shall promulgate rules of procedure governing its operations, provided that they are in accordance with Chapters 100 and 101 of Title 29, and provided that no rule shall permit proxy voting.

(a) The Council shall submit a written report of its activities and recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court at least once every year on or before March 15."

Section 2. Effective date. This Act shall take effect upon its enactment.

Approved July 16, 1993.

1993

SENATE BILL 156, amends Title 13 of the DE Code creates a Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. Signed 7/1/1993.

SENATE BILL 153, with SA 1 & 2, Amends Title 10, Chapter 9 of the DE Code relating to a Domestic Violence Diversion Program in Family Court. The law provides for early judicial intervention in misdemeanor offenses by encouraging a first offender program as an alternative to nolle prosequi or pre-arraignment arbitration. Effective 30 days after enactment. Signed 7/1/1993.

SENATE BILL 155, with SA 1, Amends Chapter 25, Title 29 of the DE Code relating to Mandatory Training of Deputy Attorneys General to include professional seminars on the topics of child physical and sexual abuse, exploitation and domestic violence. Signed 7/1/1993.

SENATE BILL 184, amends Title 10 and Title 11 of the DE Code establishing a Protection from Abuse Statute, effective 6 months after becoming a law. Signed 7/1/1993.

The DVCC sponsored a statewide seminar for judges and court staff in October 1994 entitled Judicial Intervention in Family Violence Cases.

1994

SENATE BILL 351 with SA 1, the Child Protection from Domestic Violence Act. This law requires Family Court Judges to consider evidence of domestic violence when making child custody and visitation determinations. Signed 7/8/1994.

SENATE BILL 170, amends Chapter 21, Title 11 of the DE Code pertaining to noncompliance with conditions of bail. Offenders who fail to appear or knowingly breach the conditions of their release commit a separate crime. Signed 3/31/1994.

1995

SENATE BILL 128 with SA 1 & HA 2, prohibits insurance companies from discriminating against victims of domestic violence. Signed 7/19/1995.

SENATE BILL 38, expands the acts which constitute Assault in the Second Degree by adding “recklessly causing” to the existing “intentionally causing” serious physical injury, physical injury by means of a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument and physical injury when the person is 65 or older. Signed 7/6/1995.

SENATE BILL 37, expands the DVCC membership, from 11 to 13 members, adding two at-large seats. Signed 7/6/1995.

1996

SENATE BILL 337, gives the DVCC the authority to create a Fatal Incident Review Panel. Signed 6/27/1996.

HOUSE BILL 642 with HA 1 & 2, protects victims by prohibiting disclosure of personal information by the Division of Motor Vehicles. Signed 7/17/1996.

HOUSE BILL 643, allows victims to get a court order to close their voter records. Signed 7/17/1996.

SENATE BILL 433 with SA 2, prohibits homeowners and auto insurance companies from discriminating against victims of domestic violence. Signed 7/17/1996.

HOUSE BILL 106, expands the number of seats on the DVCC to include a seat for the President Judge of Superior Court, and modified the language describing the DVCC medical community representative to broaden it to permit health care professionals, rather than only physicians, to fill the seat on the Council. Signed 5/22/1997.

HOUSE BILL 163, requires mandatory incarceration for criminal contempt of Family Court Protective Orders. Signed 7/15/1997.

SENATE BILL 48, amends the PFA statute by modifying the definition of emotional abuse; clarifying that subsequent support, custody and property division orders supersede those provisions in the PFA; clarifying the circumstances under which a PFA may be extended and making visitation provisions part of a separate interim order. Signed 7/3/1997.

1998

SENATE BILL 226, eliminates the voluntary social companion exception and makes other changes to Delaware's rape law. Signed on 6/11/98.

1999

HOUSE BILL 161, with HA 1 & 2 and with SA 1, "Firearms Bill" makes it illegal for perpetrators of domestic violence (PFA Respondents) to purchase or possess firearms through the duration of a PFA Order. Also, individuals who have been convicted of a limited category of domestic violence misdemeanors would be "persons prohibited" for five years from the date of conviction. Signed 6/24/1999.

SENATE BILL 99, Full Faith and Credit Bill honors out-of-state protective orders in Delaware and provides limited immunity for law enforcement officers who enforce what they have reason to believe is a protected person, even if it is determined after the fact that an order did not exist. Signed 6/24/1999. The DVCC hosted the Full Faith and Credit Conference for 75 participants from six states on October 1, 1999.

HOUSE BILL 46 with HA 2 and SA 1, mandates psycho-social assessment and adherence to all treatment recommendations after a second conviction for domestic violence crimes. Signed 6/24/1999.



Former Governor Carper signs HB 161 & 46 and SB 99 & 102 in the courtyard of the Kent County Family Court Building. The measures are aimed at preventing domestic violence, protecting its victims and keeping guns out of volatile and dangerous domestic situations in Delaware.

SENATE BILL 102, expands the number of DVCC seats to 16 to include the Commissioner of the Department of Correction and the Director of the Division of Family Services to serve on the council by virtue of their positions in addition to revising DVCC's annual reporting date to September 15 to better coincide with the fiscal year and strategic planning process. Signed 6/24/1999.

HOUSE BILL 389, ensures that persons who seriously injure children, through acts of abuse or neglect will receive a punishment commensurate with their crime. This bill was a substitute for HOUSE BILL 106 that was endorsed by the DVCC. Signed 6/24/1999.

HOUSE BILL 124 with HA 1 & 2, provides for additional or enhanced penalties when a pregnant woman suffers a miscarriage or stillbirth as the consequence of an assault or violent felony which is perpetrated against her. Signed 6/10/1999.

2000

HOUSE BILL 252, provides that an individual who leaves employment due to circumstances directly resulting from domestic violence shall not be disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits. Signed 6/30/2000.

2001

SENATE BILL 97, expands the DVCC seats from 16 to 18 to include Secretary of the Department of Services to Child Youth and their Families and the Secretary of Public Safety. Signed 4/24/2001.



DVCC Quarterly Meeting, July 18, 2002

2003

SENATE BILL 45, expands the number of DVCC seats from 18 to 19 to include an at-large member. Signed 6/24/2003.

2004

HOUSE BILL 421, clarifies language in Delaware's Violent Crimes Compensation statute to improve eligibility and benefits for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Signed 6/29/2004.

2005

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 7, creates a Task Force to study the feasibility of developing a Family Justice Center in Delaware. The measure which passed the Senate and the House required that a report be submitted to the General Assembly by October 31, 2005. Signed 4/14/2005.

2006

SENATE BILL 262 with SA 1, expands the Fatal Incident Review Team to include the Secretary of the Department of Education and the Director of the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. Signed 6/13/2006.

SENATE BILL 274, amends Title 25 of the Delaware Landlord-Tenant Code by permitting tenants who are domestic violence, sexual abuse, or stalking victims to terminate their leases early for safety reasons. Signed 6/22/2006.

HOUSE BILL 391 with HA 1, expands the number of DVCC seats by adding a member representing victims of sexual assault. Signed 6/1/2006.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 27, designates the month of February 2006 as Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month in Delaware. Signed 1/25/2006.



This resolution is Delaware's first designation of Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.

2007

SENATE BILL 57, expands the category of persons considered protected under the Protection From Abuse Statute to include same sex couples and dating couples in a "substantive relationship" can now seek the protection of a PFA. Signed 6/5/2007.



Advocates rallied to support the bill, wearing ribbons to Legislative Hall.

HOUSE BILL 90, adds a representative from the DVCC to the Child Protection Accountability Commission. Signed 6/28/2007.

SENATE BILL 111, adds a Felony class F level violation to the existing provisions for criminal contempt of a domestic violence protection order. Violations involving physical injury or threatened use of a weapon constitute a Class F felony. Signed 6/30/2007.

2008

SENATE BILL 253 w/SA 1, (in cooperation with the Victim's Rights Task Force) This Act enhances the harassment and stalking statutes to better protect Delawareans. Signed 6/30/2008. The DVCC collaborated with Beebe Hospital and ContactLifeline to sponsor a statewide Stalking Conference on October 24, 2008. A follow-up conference covered Delaware's Coordinated Response to Stalking on November 8, 2008.

HOUSE BILL 486 w/HA 2, HA 3, HA 4, expands available funding to domestic violence services for victims by adding a \$15 fee to all certified copies of marriage license/certificates issued and designating those fees to domestic violence programming. Signed 7/1/2008.

SENATE BILL 192, modifies the Council language describing the composition of the DVCC to ensure that the advocacy community continues to have a strong representation on the Council. Signed 4/17/2008.

HOUSE BILL 371 w/HA 1, HA 1 to HA 1, (in cooperation with the Sexual Abuse Network of Delaware) amends the State's crime victim compensation statute by adding the offenses of sexual assault and sexual abuse. This law allows for the provision of psychological services for adults who were child victims of sexual abuse or assaults. Signed 6/26/2008.

2009

HOUSE BILL 46, excludes certain criminal convictions, such as unlawful imprisonment and interference with custody, from mandatory expungement and discretionary expungement following a pardon. Signed 7/1/2009.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 21 establishes a Teen Dating Violence Task Force to evaluate and make recommendations on policies for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Education in Delaware. Signed 6/23/2009.

SENATE BILL 33, strengthens Delaware's Endangering the Welfare of a Child criminal statute by qualifying that children can witness an act of domestic violence by sound as well as sight, acknowledging that a child may have only heard the violent act from another room, but nonetheless be a witness who is emotionally impacted by it. Signed 5/12/2009.

HOUSE BILL 146 w/SA 2, allows, but does not require, the Domestic Violence Fatal Incident Review Team (FIRT) to review "near death" cases resulting from domestic violence. This bill does not otherwise modify the existing procedures for FIRT reviews and investigations of deaths resulting from domestic violence. Through victim interviews, teams are able to add the victim's perspective to their examination of the system's response and uncover more details about the incident and what led up to it. Signed 6/29/2009.

HOUSE BILL 147, adds "stepson" and "stepdaughter" to the list of what constitutes a family member for purposes of family court proceedings, including Protection From Abuse proceedings. Signed 6/26/2009.

SENATE BILL 116, expands the number of DVCC seats from 18 to 19 to ensure broad, bipartisan representation from the General Assembly. Signed 6/24/2009.

SENATE BILL 117, allows members of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council to appoint a proxy member if they will be out of State or physically disabled for a period of three months or longer. Signed 6/24/2009.

HOUSE BILL 181, adds penalties for breaching any pre-trial condition imposed by a court, for example a "no contact" condition of bail, when the accused is being detained in default of bail or in lieu of bail. Signed 7/1/2009.

2010

HOUSE BILL 336, enhances Family Court's ability to protect victims of domestic violence and abuse by authorizing Family Court to enter the no contact provisions of protection from abuse order for up to 2 years in every case and, where aggravating circumstances exist, authorizes Family Court to order no contact for as long as it deems necessary to prevent further abuse including the entry of a permanent order. Signed 7/12/2010.

HOUSE BILL 451, clarifies that Family Court may extend an ex parte order up to 30 days, for purposes other than effectuating service, where necessary to continue protection. Signed 7/27/2010.

SENATE BILL 197, recognizes the severity of the crime of strangulation by making it a stand-alone felony. Strangulation is a leading indicator in domestic violence deaths. Delaware became the 19th state with a strangulation felony law on the books. Signed 5/14/2010. In 2009, the DVCC, in collaboration with the Delaware State Police, sponsored the Domestic Violence and Strangulation Conference on intimate partner strangulation.

2011

HOUSE BILL 106, tasks the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner with sending to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council a monthly report of the homicides and suicides that occurred in Delaware, to better identify fatal incidents related to domestic violence and adds one additional chair to the Fatal Incident Review Team, increasing the number of co-chairs from two to three. Signed 6/28/2011.

SENATE BILL 28, (with the Department of Justice) This legislation protects the safety of certain victims of violent crime by creating Delaware's Address Confidentiality Program, to be administered by the Delaware Department of Justice. This program was designed to protect victims of stalking, domestic violence, sexual assault and those in Delaware's Witness Protection Program from offenders who use public records, such as voter records or driver's license registries, to locate them. A substitute address is created to which all mail will be delivered. The Act ensures that Federal, State and local governments will have access to a program participant's actual address through a waiver process established by the Department of Justice. Signed 5/19/2011. Delaware became the 20th state to adopt an Address Confidentiality Program.

2012

SENATE BILL 200, reduces the core number of Fatal Incident Review Team members from eight to seven, eliminating the requirement that a representative from the Department of Education to serve as a team member. The Department of Education serves in an ad hoc role as needed. Signed 7/5/2012.

SENATE BILL 206 w/SA 2 & HA 1, requires school districts and charter schools to establish a policy on responding to Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Assault, including guidelines on mandatory reporting and confidentiality, a protocol for responding to incidents of Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Assault and training on the issue. School districts and charter school also must ensure comprehensive healthy relationships programming is provided in the student health education programs or related courses. Signed 7/20/2012.

2013

SENATE BILL 70, adds a seat for the Court of Common Pleas to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. This increases the number of Council members from nineteen to twenty. The Court of Common Pleas handles a significant domestic violence caseload and participates in the work of the Coordinating Council.

DVCC OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

In 2008, the DVCC established the “Outstanding Community Service Award” to recognize the strong commitment of our partners in the domestic violence community. Below are the recipients to date:

- 2008 Elaine Aviola,**
New Castle County Police Department Victim Services
- 2009 Diane Glenn,**
Dover Police Department Victim Services
- 2010 Mary Davis,**
CHILD, Inc., Domestic Violence Treatment Program
- 2011 Susan Baldwin,**
United States Attorney’s Office
- 2012 Carol Post,**
Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- 2013 Neda Biggs, & Debra Reed,**
La Esperanza Delaware State Police Victim Service Center

