Maryland
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF
CRIME PREVENTION AND POLICY

Governor's Family Violence Council 2024 Annual Report

Executive Order 01.01.2012.05 F

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December 2, 2024

WES MOORE
Governor

ARUNA MILLER
Lieutenant Governor

Maryland
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF CRIME
PREVENTION AND POLICY

DOROTHY LENNIG
Executive Director

December 2, 2024

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Executive Order 01.01.2012.05 F (MSAR #9421)

Dear Governor Moore:

As required by Executive Order 01.01.2012.05 F, please find an enclosed copy of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy's report, titled *Governor's Family Violence Council 2024 Annual Report*. This report includes information regarding the status of family violence in Maryland and recommended improvements to the State's activities to prevent family violence.

Should you have any questions relating to the information provided in this report, please feel free to contact me at 410-697-9338.

As required, five color copies will be sent to the DLS Legislative Library.

Sincerely,

Dorothy J. Lennig, Esq.
Executive Director

cc: Sarah Albert, Department of Legislative Services (5 copies)

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments **2**
Roster of Members **3**
Introduction **5**
Governor's Family Violence Council **5**
FY 2024 Areas of Study 6
Abuse Intervention Program Certification 6
Abusers Not Meeting Conditions of Court Orders 8
Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors 9
Stalking Prevention 12
Survivor Advisory Council 13
FY 2025 Areas of Study 14
Program Updates 15
Legislation 16
Looking Ahead: Goals for 2025 16
Appendix A: Certified Abuse Intervention Programs **17**

Acknowledgments

This *Governor's Family Violence Council 2024 Annual Report* is the result of hard work, valuable input, and dedication from numerous stakeholders, including government officials, law enforcement, legislators, community advocates, victims' rights representatives, state and local government representatives, and survivors. Everyone was generous with their time and supportive feedback. Their participation in the Governor's Family Violence Council and their feedback, suggestions, and recommendations were invaluable for the final report. This report would not have been possible without their active participation and support.



January 2024 Governor's Family Violence Council meeting

Roster of Members

The Governor's Family Violence Council is comprised of various members, led by a Chair and a Co-Chair, appointed by Governor Moore.

Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, Co-Chair
Lt. Governor of Maryland

Attorney General Anthony Brown, Co-Chair
Maryland Attorney General

Lillian Agbeyegbe, **DrPH**
Survivor Advocate

Senator Mary Beth Carozza
Maryland Senate

Colonel Roland L. Butler, Jr.
Superintendent, Maryland State Police

Joseph Coale, Esq.
State's Attorney, Talbot County State's Attorney's Office

Deborah Feinstein, Esq.
Chief, Special Victims Division, Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office

Norwood Johnson
Survivor

Dorothy J. Lennig, Esq.
Executive Director, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy

Rafael Lopez
Secretary, Maryland Department of Human Services

Pamela Love, PhD
President, DP Love Enterprises

Carmel Martin
Special Secretary, Governor's Office for Children

Lisa Nitsch, MSW
Director of Training and Education, House of Ruth, Maryland

Katie O'Malley
The Women's Law Center

Leslye Orloff
Director, National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project

Jennifer Pollitt Hill
Executive Director, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence

Stacey Rice, Esq.
Rice Law

Delegate April Rose
Maryland House of Delegates

Laure Ruth, Esq.
Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence

Vincent Schiraldi
Secretary, Department of Juvenile Services

Laura Herrera Scott
Secretary, Maryland Department of Health

Carolyn Scruggs
Secretary, Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

David Shultie
Administrative Office of the Courts

Delegate Kriselda Valderrama
Maryland House of Delegates

Carey Wright
Superintendent, Maryland State Department of Education

Jeanne Yeager
Executive Director, Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence

Family Violence Council Alternate Representatives/Proxies

Heather Amador
Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy

Geri Byrd
Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Joyce Dantzler
Maryland Department of Health

Jessica Dickerson
Department of Juvenile Services

Lolita Gleaton
Maryland Department of Human Services

Susan Inman
Governor's Office for Children

Lisae C. Jordan, Esq.
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

John McGinnis
Maryland State Department of Education

Christina Miles
Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office

Zachary Norfolk, Esq.
Office of the Attorney General

Molly O'Hara
Maryland General Assembly

Funsho Oparinde
Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Captain Brian Smith
Maryland State Police

Introduction

In accordance with Executive Order 01.01.2012.05 F, the Governor's Family Violence Council must submit a report to the Governor by December 1 of each year as it relates to the status of family violence in Maryland and to recommend improvements to the State's activities to prevent family violence.

Pursuant to its charge, this *Governor's Family Violence Council 2024 Annual Report* includes information on abuse intervention program certification, access to benefits for immigrant survivors, stalking prevention, and the creation of a survivor advisory council. It also provides a follow-up to several reports submitted in prior years. To view these reports, please visit the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy's website at: https://gocpp.maryland.gov/reports-and-publications/.

Governor's Family Violence Council

Under the leadership of Co-Chairs Lieutenant Governor Miller and Attorney General Brown, and with the support of staff from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP), the Governor's Family Violence Council (Council) embarked upon a variety of projects to improve accountability, awareness, and research in statewide family violence policy over the past year.

Building on the success from prior years, the Council utilizes a framework in which members choose, by majority vote, key areas of a family violence prevention strategy to focus on within the year. Historically, the member who raises the focus area or issue will lead the workgroup addressing that issue for one year. External stakeholders are invited to participate in the workgroups to ensure those with relevant expertise are included. At the conclusion of each year, the workgroups present their findings and recommendations to GOCPP for consideration and implementation.

In 2024, the following five workgroups addressed programs and activities related to preventing family violence:

- The Abuse Intervention Program Certification Workgroup added a requirement to the Operational Guidelines for Abuse Intervention Programs for a memorandum of understanding between the abuse intervention program and the comprehensive domestic violence program.

- The Abusers Not Meeting Conditions of Court Orders Workgroup continues to collaborate with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to increase oversight of offenders ordered to complete abuse intervention programs.
- The Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors Workgroup hosted several webinars. It issued a report on how Maryland can improve access to public benefits for immigrant crime survivors preparing to file for immigration relief.
- The Stalking Prevention Workgroup supported legislation to expand the statute of limitations for stalking, sexual extortion, and revenge porn cases.
- The Survivor Advisory Council Workgroup held ten focus groups with 69 domestic violence survivors to learn about issues in services and programming, areas for improvement, experiences sharing their stories and input, and recommendations for their engagement in ongoing advocacy and system reform.

The Council will continue to pursue the efforts of the five workgroups in FY 2025.

FY 2024 Areas of Study

In FY 2024, the Council continued to address issues related to domestic violence to provide the Governor with timely and accurate information on family violence and to make recommendations to reduce and eliminate abusive behaviors. The Council also collaborated with its partners to address abuse intervention program certification, defendants' noncompliance with court orders, access to benefits for immigrant survivors, stalking prevention, and a survivor advisory council (*as described below*).

Abuse Intervention Program Certification

The Abuse Intervention Program (AIP) Certification Workgroup, chaired by Dr. Lillian Agbeyegbe, reviews the Operational Guidelines for Abuse Intervention Programs each year and makes recommendations and updates when necessary. This year, the Workgroup recommended the Council include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the AIP and the Comprehensive Domestic Violence Program (CDVP). The MOU requirement is important to build a collaborative relationship between service providers to aid in a coordinated community response to hold abusive partners responsible and keep victims and survivors safe.

Several abuse intervention programs failed to submit a MOU with their certification application, which prompted the Council to hold a technical assistance session in September 2024 for AIPs and CDVPs to understand the new MOU requirement. The Council also developed a template MOU to assist with outlining roles and expectations for the programs. To view the template, please visit https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/CDVP_AIP-MOU-Template-1.pdf.

In addition, the Workgroup developed a one-pager to provide information on abuse intervention programs to stakeholders (*as illustrated below*).



The AIP one pager can be found at https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/AIP-One-Pager-.pdf

The Workgroup will also continue to partner with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the House of Ruth-Maryland on statewide training efforts for referral sources and partners on the importance and efficacy of abuse intervention programs.



Rebecca Allyn, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, and Lisa Nitsch, House of Ruth Maryland, presenting on Abuse Intervention Programs at the Annual Judicial Conference in April 2024

Abusers Not Meeting Conditions of Court Orders

The Workgroup , chaired by Lisa Nitsch, was created to address the issue of defendants in family violence cases who fail to meet the conditions of their probation or whose probation expires while enrolled in an AIP; these defendants face almost no consequences when their cases are closed. When the Workgroup was originally convened from 2014 to 2015, it met with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) and requested data fields to be added to the Offender Case Management System (OCMS). DPSCS added AIP-related data fields to the OCMS in August 2020.

The Workgroup reconvened in 2021 to answer: *What is the outcome of cases when defendants fail to meet conditions of a court order, and what are the repercussions?* Due to the updates made to the OCMS to include additional data fields to track AIP orders and completion, the Council requested violation of probation data related to AIPs from DPSCS. Between August 2020 and October 2021, the Workgroup requested the following number of offenders:

- With AIP as a condition of probation

- Who fail to complete AIP within probation period
- Who were violated for failure to complete AIP within probation period (of those, number of offenders where probation was continued, revoked, or closed, as well as number of offenders with failure to complete AIP or AIP condition removed)

Based on the data received, which included 18 offenders, the Workgroup found that DPSCS was not using the new OCMS data fields for AIP. As a result, DPSCS planned to train agents on the new fields to better track AIP data and hold abusers accountable.

The Council requested the same data for FY 2023, which resulted in 179 offenders. From this total, only one court-ordered defendant completed an AIP, and 72 defendants' probation was closed unsatisfactorily. It also showed that DPSCS agents were not utilizing the AIP data points in OCMS. For this reason, training is still needed. The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the House of Ruth Maryland are open to providing training to improve AIP data collection within DPSCS' Division of Parole and Probation.

Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors

The Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors Workgroup, chaired by Leslye Orloff, developed recommendations on benefit access for immigrant survivors of domestic violence. To accomplish this, the Workgroup examined Maryland's benefit policies and laws in comparison to other states, the gaps and barriers that immigrant survivors face when accessing services, the U visa certification process and how/if it is working, and how immigrant survivors access criminal injuries compensation and the associated barriers.

In response to a survey from May 2023, the Workgroup held three webinars in late 2023 that focused on language access and U and T visa certification.[1] Two webinars addressed U and T visa certification: one provided information for the agencies that certify the visas, and one provided information for the victim advocates who assist survivors in obtaining a visa. The third webinar addressed language access for victim advocates and attorneys.

[1] U visas provide legal status to victims of certain "qualifying criminal activities" who have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse, and possess information concerning that crime, and who have been, are being, or are likely to be helpful to law enforcement or government officials. T visas provide legal status to certain victims of human trafficking who assist law enforcement authorities in the investigation or prosecution of trafficking crimes.



The Workgroup and the National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project hosted several webinars on language access and U and T visa certification

The Workgroup and the National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project (NIWAP) conducted research and provided recommendations on improving access to the public benefits safety net in Maryland for immigrant crime survivors who have filed or are preparing to file for immigration relief. The Workgroup researched public benefits such as food assistance, cash assistance, healthcare, and Supplemental Security Income, as well as driver's licenses for people who are unable to provide proof of lawful status, specifically immigrant survivors of crime focusing specifically on domestic violence, child abuse, human sex and labor trafficking, sexual assault.

Recommendations from the final report include:[2]

- Create and advocate for opportunities to be integrated into immigrant communities, as well as expand the eligibility of public benefits to more immigrant crime victims in Maryland. This will ensure immigrant families are treated with respect and dignity as well as receive proper health care and any other available state services and support. This recommendation aims to keep immigrant families intact, improve the ability of immigrant victims of crime and abuse to rebuild safe lives with their children and foster the ability of immigrant crime victims, immigrant children, and immigrant families to thrive in Maryland.
- Offer State-funded public benefits to immigrants, such as occupational and professional licenses, by expanding Maryland's apprenticeship programs to help underrepresented communities gain better access to high-paying jobs.
- Expand the State-subsidized health care for immigrant survivors in Maryland. These resources will help survivors leave abusive environments, properly address survivors' crime victimization concerns to heal, and reassure survivors about the importance of seeking medical care without fear caused by either their immigration status or financial limitations.
- Provide State-funded Medicaid equivalent coverage that includes, but is not limited to, prenatal care to pregnant children and adults who would be eligible for Medicaid or Maryland CHIP but are not because of their immigration status and postpartum healthcare coverage for 12 months to all pregnant residents regardless of immigration status.
- Extend the eligibility to include immigrant victims who have filed or are preparing to file VAWA Self-Petitions, U and T visas applications for SIJS, Continued Presence, and HHS OTIP eligibility letters to provide safety net access that is not subject to the five-year bar before immigrant survivors are eligible for federal funds. This modeled approach would be a combination of the best practices stemming from the current legal regimes of California and Oregon.
- Update the requirements for State residents to apply for a standard driver's license or State identification card to eliminate the current law's tax return requirement. State residents should be able to apply for a driver's license or identification card regardless of immigration status if they provide proof of residence, age, and identity. VAWA Confidentiality's privacy protections should also be extended to all applicants, regardless of whether they have filed for humanitarian immigration relief, to ensure that

[2] Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. (2024). *FVC Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors Workgroup's Recommendations: Expanding Access to Benefits for Immigrant Crime Victims*. https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/Public-Benefits-MD-Workgroup-Recommendations.pdf

all immigrant crime victims receive the privacy necessary to ensure their safety and the safety of their children and family members.
- Expand the SNAP eligibility by redefining and expanding the definition of "low-income family" to reach more families and increase equitable access to nutritious options.
- Modify the State tax return requirement on a student's parent or guardian to exclude the tax return for undocumented students to access in-state tuition; eliminate the time requirement for a student to register in college or university; and change the deadline to sign an affidavit saying that they will apply for Legal Permanent Residency.

To view the complete recommendations, please visit GOCPP's website at: https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/Public-Benefits-MD-Workgroup-Recommendations.pdf. The public benefits state by state comparison is available at: https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/wp-content/uploads/Public-Benefits-Comparison-Maryland_FINAL-12.19.23.pdf.

Stalking Prevention

The Stalking Prevention Workgroup, chaired by Debbie Feinstein, Esq., continued to examine stalking laws in Maryland and how they may be improved to enhance the safety of victims and survivors. The Workgroup also examined the connection between lethality and stalking in order to address this issue at the State level. To accomplish this, the Workgroup explored the nexus between stalking and homicides, the nexus between stalking and protective orders, and investigations to provide recommendations to improve the safety of victims and survivors in Maryland.

The Workgroup discussed a key issue with stalking prosecutions: the statute of limitations of one year, which is a barrier for law enforcement to conduct their investigation, provide evidence, and allow time for prosecution within the time frame. Workgroup members and legislative stakeholders drafted and introduced legislation to expand the statute of limitations for stalking, as well as sexual extortion and revenge porn. The legislation was passed during the 2024 legislative session (*please refer to the Legislation section for more information*).

To build on these efforts, the Workgroup will continue to gather data, identify training needs, propose legislation, and partner with relevant stakeholders such as the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association to improve the safety of victims and survivors in Maryland.



Pictured, left to right: Melanie Shapiro (formerly with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence), Mary Setzer and Sarah David (Office of the State Prosecutor), Ways & Means Chairwoman Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, and Debbie Feinstein, Esq. (Council member) advocating for legislation to support domestic violence survivors in Annapolis, Maryland

Survivor Advisory Council

The Survivor Advisory Council Workgroup, chaired by Dr. Lillian Agbyegbe, researched a framework for a separate survivor council within the Council in order to support survivors' voices and gather their input to guide system reform and responses to domestic violence. The Workgroup also developed a plan to hold focus groups with survivors to learn from them regarding:

- Issues in services and programming
- Areas for improvement in services and programming
- Experiences with sharing their stories and input
- Recommendations for engagement in ongoing advocacy and system reform/improvement

The Workgroup utilized the comprehensive domestic violence programs to inform and recruit survivors for the focus groups. The Workgroup held ten focus groups, organized by region (Western Maryland, Metro DC, Metro Baltimore, Southern Maryland, Eastern Shore). Participants received compensation, in the amount of $75.00, for their participation.

Ten survivor focus groups were held virtually via Zoom in February 2024, led by Dr. Pamela Jordan, Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence, and Dr. Lillian Agbeyegbe, Council member and survivor advocate. A total of 69 survivors participated in the focus groups. The focus groups identified law enforcement as the most common entity survivors initially turned to for help. Survivors shared that professionals need to be better educated on the dynamics of domestic violence and characteristics of abusers, and the need for greater emphasis on holistic/proactive help and guidance. Many survivors also indicated the need for peer support to connect with other survivors. Most survivors relayed the concern of their children as the turning point to leave their abuser or seek help.

Based on the focus groups, the Workgroup identified several recommendations:

- Continue education and awareness about the complexities of domestic violence and resources available, especially within law enforcement, and include education to youth
- Provide holistic help for survivors, including follow-up and peer support from providers
- Increase accountability for abusers
- Include survivors' input in policy development and service improvement

To view the complete findings from the focus groups, please visit GOCPP's website at: https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/FVC-Survivor-Focus-Group-Report-2024.pdf.

FY 2025 Areas of Study

In April 2024, members of the Council voted to continue its work on the five workgroups: the Abuse Intervention Program Certification Workgroup, the Abusers Not Meeting Conditions of Court Orders Workgroup, the Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors Workgroup, the Stalking Prevention Workgroup, and the Survivor Advisory Council Workgroup.

Program Updates

The Council serves as the certifying body for all AIPs in Maryland. Specifically, the Council certifies AIPs for inclusion in the Administrative Office of the Courts' *Bench Book for Maryland Judges* to refer abusers to appropriate intervention programs.

In April 2024, the Council received 15 applications for AIP certification, including 13 applications for recertification and two applications for new programs. Because several applications did not include the new MOU requirement, the Council approved a six-month conditional recertification period for programs to develop and submit an MOU. Programs must submit the MOU by December 1, 2024. Through a peer review process, the Council reviewed the applications, which resulted in the recertification of eight AIPs and conditional recertification of five AIPs (*see Appendix A for a list of the certified AIPs*). Two programs did not receive certification.

AIP certification is valid for three years. Once certification has been issued, an audit may be conducted at any time during the three-year certification period to ensure programs are compliant with the AIP Operational Guidelines for Abuse Intervention Programs in Maryland set forth by the Council.[3]

In late 2023, 10 programs received site visits, of which all were found to be in compliance. In 2024, six programs will receive a site visit. In addition, between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, 1,109 participants completed an AIP in Maryland.



Pictured left to right: Dr. Lillian Agbeyegbe (Council member), Melissa Bitting and Rebecca Allyn (Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy), Erin Wilkins (formerly with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence), and Laure Ruth (Council member) conducted a site visit of the AIP at House of Ruth Maryland

[3] Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. (2019). *AIP Operational Guidelines for Abuse Intervention Programs*. https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/fvc-aip-operational-guidelines.pdf

Legislation

The Council provided letters of support for the following bills that were passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2024:

- Senate Bill 391/House Bill 544: *Criminal Law - Sexual Extortion, Stalking, and Revenge Porn - Statute of Limitations and In Banc Review:* Altering the statute of limitations applicable to the crime of sexual extortion to be 5 years and the crime of stalking to be 10 years; providing that the State may institute a prosecution for revenge porn at any time; and providing that, for purposes of the Maryland Constitution, a person who commits revenge porn shall be deemed to have committed a misdemeanor whose punishment is confinement in the penitentiary and may reserve a point or question for certain in banc review.
- Senate Bill 439/House Bill 656: *Family Law – Victims of Domestic Violence Program – Certification and Grant Fund*: Requiring victims of domestic violence program to be certified by the federally recognized State domestic violence coalition as a comprehensive domestic violence program; establishing the Victims of Domestic Violence Program Grant Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund in GOCPP; requiring interest earnings of the Fund to be credited to the Fund; and allowing the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of $5,000,000 to the Fund.

Looking Ahead: Goals for 2025

To continue these efforts, and with the support of the Moore-Miller Administration, the Council identified several goals to pursue in FY 2025, to include the following:

- Deliver and accept workgroup recommendations on access to benefits for immigrant survivors.
- Deliver and accept workgroup recommendations on stalking prevention.
- Deliver and accept workgroup recommendations on abusers not meeting conditions of court orders.
- Deliver and accept workgroup recommendations on the survivor advisory council.
- Complete certification and review of the AIPs that are due for recertification and/or requesting certification for the first time.
- Conduct audits of AIPs to ensure compliance with the operational guidelines.
- Build capacity of Maryland domestic violence organizations by assisting with information and awareness sharing.
- Advise the Governor, through the Executive Director of GOCPP, on workgroup topics and recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year.

Appendix A: Certified Abuse Intervention Programs

The following AIPs are certified in Maryland[4]:

Abused Persons Program, New Beginnings Abuser Intervention Program
Alcohol & Drug Intervention (ADI)
Calvert County Health Department, Calvert Center for Change, Abuser Intervention Program
Catoctin Counseling Center
Center for Abused Persons
Citizens Assisting and Sheltering the Abused (CASA), Inc.
Dove Center, Abuser Intervention Program
Family Crisis Center of Baltimore County, New Behaviors Group Program
Family Crisis Resource Center, Abuser Intervention Program
HARBEL Community Organization, Inc., Harbel Prevention and Recovery Center
Heartly House, Abuse Intervention Program
House of Ruth Maryland, Gateway Project
Life Crisis Center, Inc.
Life Scout Counseling (formerly North Carroll Counseling Center)
Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence, Abuser Intervention Program
My Covenant Place, Alpha Project
Relational Excellence, Engaging Men's Program
Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC), Inc., Abuser Intervention Program
Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy
Springboard Community Services, Abuser Intervention Program
Synergy Family Services, Inc.
TurnAround, Abuser Intervention Program
YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County

[4] Detailed information about the certified abuse intervention programs can be found at https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/AIP-Certified-List-2024-1.pdf.