

# October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

**DOVER** – Nearly one in four women, and one in nine men, will experience domestic violence, in their lifetime, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In Delaware, that translates to 136,000 women and approximately 108,000 men who have been impacted. As October draws to a close, the Division of Public Health (DPH) is highlighting Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the long-term health impacts of this important social issue.

Victims of domestic violence, including women, men and children, suffer more than the immediate physical and emotional trauma of abuse. Those who have suffered physical and mental trauma, including the trauma of witnessing incidents of domestic violence, are at greater risk for many long-term negative health outcomes, including depression, heart disease and hypertension, alcohol and substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancies, diabetes, asthma, and obesity. National statistics estimate between 50 to 90 percent of women in substance abuse treatment have been victims of domestic violence.

In support of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, DPH, in partnership with the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCADV), held a workshop for DPH staff and community partners, on Oct. 19, 2017. Participants explored domestic violence as a health issue and worked to understand how it impacts other health areas like chronic diseases and mental health. Viewing domestic violence through a health lens and employing effective strategies to prevent it can have a positive impact on a person's overall health.

“Domestic violence is a terrifying experience for many women

and men, as well as any children who may be exposed,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “It’s important that we bring awareness to this and give victims all the support and resources we can to help them overcome, recover and feel safe enough to move forward and live healthy, fulfilling lives.”



Domestic violence, also described as intimate partner violence, is a pattern of abusive behavior and coercive control that can happen in a dating, marital, or live-in intimate partner relationship, according to the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCADV). In an abusive relationship, one partner tries to maintain control over the other by using physical, psychological, verbal, sexual violence and/or coercion. Although factors such as drug and alcohol use, stress, or a family history of abuse may contribute to the problem, domestic violence is primarily an issue of power and control. Domestic violence looks different in every relationship. It can occur among heterosexual or same-sex relationships and does not require sexual intimacy.

The recent #MeToo hashtag campaign on social media has brought to light one aspect of intimate partner violence, as many prominent women in Hollywood self-identified they had been sexually harassed, abused, or threatened. But the hashtag spread quickly throughout the country with millions of women coming forward to share their tales of abuse. The campaign took off after several women came forward with allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein. While the #MeToo campaign has focused primarily on harassment in the workplace, it shows that survivors can find a voice and come forward without feeling shame.

Throughout the month of October, a “twibbon overlay” can be added on Facebook and Twitter profile pictures. A purple ribbon, used to signify domestic violence awareness, will appear over profile pictures on the social media sites. To add

the twibbon overlay, visit <https://twibbon.com/Support/help-prevent-ipv>.

More information on domestic violence and resources for help are available from the DPH Office of Women's Health at <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dph/mh/owh.html>.

If you are a victim of domestic violence and are looking for help, visit DCADV's website at <https://dcadv.org/domestic-violence/how-to-get-help/local-programs.html> for local resources, or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*