

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL NETWORK OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY (DVLN) THE EDUCATION & AWARENESS COMMITTEE

*The Domestic Violence Legal Network of Montgomery County (DVLN) has been established to provide education and awareness to families involved in domestic violence.*

*We are a group of 32 agencies that provide a variety of services and referrals to those involved.*

*We do what we do because we know that **one-in-four woman are victimized** by a loved one or family member; **as well as one-in-seven men!** With children living in the household often suffering for a lifetime, if the issue is not uncovered and addressed.*

**OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH** so to that end we have decided to offer a list of service providers along with how they can help; whether you are a victim, abuser, child, or family member look to help. Throughout the month of October we will be publishing information from many of our members to help anyone who needs assistance.

**At the end of the article we will publish a list of local, state, and national agencies who may help!**

### Shelter and Hotline information



Daily, **Laurel House** continues to monitor the spread of the coronavirus, taking all possible precautions to keep our staff, volunteers, and clients safe. In this effort, all our **satellite counseling offices** throughout Montgomery County have been closed until further notice. Our **administrative and outreach office** in East Norriton has remained partially open with minimal staffing.

To facilitate social distancing, we are not accepting new clients into our **shelter** currently. Instead, when an individual or family needs shelter from domestic abuse, we are placing them in a local hotel and providing advocacy and case management services, as well as meals and other needed supplies. Safety planning, resource referral and support are still being offered through our **24-hour confidential hotline at 1-800-642-3150**.

The families in our **Transitional Housing** program continue to receive support and services. Our Family Advocate has been busy assisting these families with their children's virtual learning and school assignments. **Counselors** continue to provide services using telehealth via phone/text and video conferencing technology. The use of this technology allows us to ensure that anyone who needs, or is currently receiving, counseling from Laurel House has access to continued sessions. Laurel House's **Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) advocates are working remotely** and continue to take crisis calls from first responders. Advocates provide safety planning, PFA assistance, legal advocacy and can safely drop off needed supplies (i.e. cleaning supplies, toiletries, etc.) to clients through 'no contact' measures. Our Attorney and Paralegal also continue to work with current clients and new referrals.

Laurel House's **Community Educators** are hosting virtual trainings for middle schools, high schools, and colleges on safe dating and friendship fundamentals. If an educator is interested in setting up a virtual learning session for their students, they can contact [education@laurel-house.org](mailto:education@laurel-house.org).

While these are uncertain times, we will get through this crisis together and continue in our mission to end domestic violence. We urge everyone to stay safe and be as cautious as possible right now.

**SHELTER AND HOTLINE (CONT.)**



**THE WOMEN'S CENTER OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

Since 1976, the **Women's Center of Montgomery County** has been working tirelessly to provide support to those impacted by domestic violence and other forms of abuse. During the challenges of the current pandemic, we have strived to overcome obstacles so that our community has the support they need. Here are our services:

- **Hotline: 1-800-773-2424.** It is free, confidential and available 24/7.
- **Peer Counseling and Support Groups:** We have limited "by appointment only" availability for one-on-one counseling in our offices. We also offer remote sessions for individuals and groups.
- **Legal Advocacy:** The Women's Center's Legal Advocacy Team is remotely available to help individuals navigate the pandemic-related changes in the PFA process, and other court matters.
- **Safe Housing:** Emergency housing options are available for those in crises. The Women's Center has a variety of options to discuss.
- **Emergency Funds and Necessities:** In crisis situations, supplemental funds may be made available. Clothing and toiletries can be supplied to an individual or family through our Second Chances Thrift Shoppe or by contacting one of our offices.
- **Medical Advocacy:** The Women's Center Medical Advocate program is available at the Abington Jefferson, Lansdale Jefferson and Holy Redeemer Hospitals.
- **Education:** Programs for Students from pre-school through high school are available remotely. They are interactive, engaging and relevant as they focus on Healthy Relationships. The Women's Center continues to provide programs for colleges, workplaces and community organizations through technology.

Beyond our HOTLINE, the Women's Center is pleased to offer these methods of communication:

- **SAFE DATING TEEN TEXTLINE:** This is available to TEENS ONLY. In collaboration with Access Services, SDTT is a confidential way for teens to discuss relationship issues through texting.

**SAFE DATING TEEN TEXTLINE  
HOURS: 5 PM-12 AM  
TEXT "CHAT" to: 833-641-0110**

- We offer bilingual and Language Line options.

The Women's Center has 11 locations throughout Montgomery County. All of our offices are staffed, but we encourage those seeking help to call first. Please visit: [www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org) for further information.



## RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN

### The Office of Children & Youth Continues to Support Families through the Pandemic

The Office of Children & Youth (OCY) has been fully open and functional since the onset of the pandemic; accepting referrals, visiting families and providing services. Always a mobile profession, OCY had much of the needed technology and procedures in place to accommodate virtual contacts and social distancing. The car, the kitchen table, and the local playground, quickly replaced the cubicle, conference table, and the visiting room. Whenever possible, caseworkers meet with children and families outside, on the front porch, the back yard, or the local park. But, when there is a concern for child safety, caseworkers, like all first responders, put themselves at risk to do their job.

Hardships caused by the pandemic; job loss, school closures, illness, and isolation greatly impact the families involved with OCY. Many need help with basic needs, child care, and other services. Concerns about unreported child abuse and domestic violence grow as children are disconnected from teachers and other mandated reporters. With the help from the Office of Integrates Services, OCY quickly mobilized to distribute food and other needed items. OCY workers and contracted providers have found new and innovative ways to offer supports and deliver services to families safely. OCY works closely with the Office of Community Information & Education to increase awareness through social media about the signs of child abuse and encourage all community members to be vigilant and report abuse.

OCY has over 150 employees; even before the pandemic it was hard to get to know everyone. Keeping employees connected in the face of COVID-19 has been challenging. The OCY Continuous Quality Improvement Team put into place a variety of events aimed at bringing staff together - virtually. During Spirit Week staff members were invited to daily Zoom events like Pet Day, Bring Your Kid to Work Day, and a Friday afternoon "Mocktail Hour." Virtual coffee breaks and lunch hours create opportunities for "water-cooler" conversations and monthly all staff meetings bring everyone together. Recognizing the added stress brought on by working through a pandemic and ongoing social justice issues, OCY dedicated the month of June to self-care and sponsored related activities such as Listening Circles and guided meditation.

The upheaval caused by the pandemic led to an increased need for Team Decision Making Meetings. While this is not a new service, holding these meetings via ZOOM has been an adjustment, and a lifesaver. Families and caseworkers come together to address specific problems. Trained facilitators guide the strength-based discussion and settle on collaborative solutions helping to avert further crises.

A silver lining of the pandemic has been an increase in people interested in becoming foster parents. Switching from in person to virtual training for prospective parents has worked surprisingly well. Our foster parents have been a bedrock of stability for our children throughout these challenging times.

**Montgomery County Domestic Relations Section (DRS)** continues to offer services to clients including but not limited to: Parent Locate Services, Paternity Establishment, and the Establishment, Modification, and Enforcement of Child, Spousal, and Medical Support orders.

Due to COVID-19, clients are currently unable to physically appear in the DRS. However, all services continue to operate. At the present time Support filings, Support conferences, and Support hearings are being addressed remotely, via telephonic or video conference. Clients are able to submit their requests for support services online by accessing E-Services on the PA Child Support Website or they may mail, e-mail, or fax the forms and documents required. Documents for conferences and hearings can be uploaded via a secured link that is provided to clients upon the filing being reviewed or a conference/hearing being scheduled. **The Montgomery County Domestic Relations Section continues its adherence to strict policy to safeguard confidential client information for all of its clients.** For clients experiencing domestic violence there are several options available to allow the client to pursue support safely. These options include, but are not limited to:

## Domestic Relations (cont.)

- Scheduling the parties' genetic testing appointment on different dates and times
- Contacting the client prior to the support conference to address their concerns and assess risk(s)
- Updating the Family Violence Indicator (FVI) for a protected member.

When the DRS becomes aware that there is an active Protection from Abuse Order (PFA) for a member on a case against the other party, or there is reason to believe that the possible disclosure of information regarding the whereabouts of an individual or child may jeopardize their safety, the DRS employee will update the FVI for that member in PACSES (PA Child Support Enforcement System). The **Family Violence Indicator (FVI)** prevents sharing any information that may be used to locate a person that is at risk. The protected members address will not print on forms. This procedure allows families that need protection to benefit from Child Support services, while ensuring their safety.

### Contact Information:

MAIL: MCDRS, PO Box 311, Norristown, PA 19404

EMAIL: CSMontgomery@PACSES.com

PHONE: (610)278-3646

FAX: (610)239-9637

PA Child Support Website: <http://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/csww>

## LEGAL RESOURCES

### Calls to 911

The Norristown Police Department, as part of DVLN and Domestic Violence Awareness Month, would like everyone to remember the following when it comes to domestic violence:

- Domestic violence is one of our highest priorities, as we know that the incidents are likely to continue until the cycle can be broken and an intervention can be held;
- Call 911 for any emergencies that arise and do not be afraid-we are here to protect victims of domestic violence, no matter what the person's status may be; 911 can also be used in non-emergent situations where a victim or potential victim is just looking to speak to an officer about his or her concerns or questions;
- The police are also here to protect any children that may be living with domestic violence incidents occurring in their homes, no matter if they are victims or not;
- We will refer any and all victims to the appropriate social agency that will best be able to provide support and assistance to any victims or family members that are experiencing domestic violence;
- All victims have the right to a copy of any police report that they filed and should request a copy of the report for their own records.

**Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania (LASP)** provides legal services in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties. Practice areas include PFAs, family law, unemployment compensation, landlord-tenant, public benefits, SSI/SSDI, consumer housing, criminal record clearing, name changes, and bankruptcy. Services are free to those experiencing domestic violence, regardless of income or immigration status. LASP's offices are currently closed to the public, but the Montgomery County domestic violence helpline is open at 610-283-8165 during business hours. For additional information, please visit our website at [www.lasp.org](http://www.lasp.org).

## LEGAL RESOURCES (cont.)

### Legal Remedies-Protection from Abuse

The Montgomery County Protection from Abuse (PFA) office is open during COVID and filers may enter the Courthouse to file for temporary protection orders. All filers must comply with the CDC and Montgomery County's COVID Guidelines. Anyone entering the Courthouse will be subject to a noninvasive temperature check and must wear a mask.

The doors open to the public between 8:30 – 2:00 p.m. PFA filers will be instructed where to go to fill out the necessary paperwork and meet with a representative from the PFA office.

Due to the length of time required for completion of the process, filers are encouraged to arrive as early as possible. In order to have a temporary PFA heard the same day, the filer must have completed the petition and be at the Prothonotary's office to file by 1:00 p.m. All others are given the emergency phone number **1-800-773-2424** to call after hours to the Women's Center Domestic Violence Hotline for assistance to obtain an emergency PFA after hours. The filer must return the following day to complete the process.

Please note that no one other than the filer may enter the Courthouse unless the filer needs assistance due to a disability or language assistance. Filers are advised not to bring children to the Courthouse, however if unavoidable, an adult should accompany the filer and watch the children outside the Courthouse.

## BELOW FIND ONGOING LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL RESOURCES. SOME MAY BE ALTERED DURING THIS HEALTH CARE EMERGENCY

### Resources for Victims of Domestic Violence

#### Residing in Montgomery County, PA

**Laurel House-Domestic Violence Hotline/Shelter** offers counseling, education and crisis intervention (DART), as well as referrals for all victims and families looking to support a victim.

24/7 Hotline 800-642-3150 Website: [www.laurel-house.org](http://www.laurel-house.org)

**The Women's Center of Montgomery County/Legal Advocacy Project** counseling, and other resources at seven locations throughout the Montgomery County.

24/7 Hotline: 800-773-2424 Website: [www.wcmontco.org](http://www.wcmontco.org)

**Victim Services Center**-support for crime victims including sexual assault

24/7 hotline 888-521-0983 Website: [www.victimservicescenter.org](http://www.victimservicescenter.org)

**Child Abuse hotline** and website to report suspicion of child abused or neglected.

24/7 Childline: 1-800-932-0313 Electronic reporting: [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis)

**National Coalition Against Domestic Violence** offers a comprehensive list of hotlines, shelters and legal information nationwide.

24/7 hotline: 800797-safe (7233) Website: [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

### Montgomery County has a wealth of services and resources for residents who are victims of domestic violence.

#### Housing

**Your Way Home:** If you are homeless or have concerns regarding homelessness this county sponsored agency will provide you will support.

P: 877-646-6306 Website: see *United Way 211*

**Address Confidentially Program:** Eligibility-current or former victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.

If accepted into the program you will be given an alternative mailing address which meets the requirements for court and government records, such as driver's licenses, library cards, traffic tickets, vehicle registration, employment security, school records, worker's comp and court petitions.

Contact: to apply contact a local domestic violence agency. For further information about the program:

P: 1-800-563-6399 Website: [www.paacp.org](http://www.paacp.org)

## LEGAL SERVICES

### Legal Aid of Southeast Pa.

Services: Provides a variety of legal services to low income and vulnerable people residing in Montgomery, Bucks, Chester, and Delaware Counties.

Locations: 625 Swede St. Norristown, Pa 19401 P: 610-275-5400#3 Website: [www.lasp.org](http://www.lasp.org)

### The PA Protection from Abuse Act (PFA) *(what you should know)*

A PFA is a civil order that you file on behalf of yourself or those who you are legally responsible for. You may file against a current or former intimate partner or family member who is abusing or stalking you or, those who are legally in your care. (This does not include strangers or roommates). It covers a variety of optional requests.

When the courthouse is closed you can file for an emergency PFA by calling 911 or the countywide radio room at 610-275-1222 and you will be connected with the Magisterial District Justice on duty.

For legal advocacy contact the Women's Center of Montgomery County Office, 107 E Main St, Norristown, PA 19401 during business hours 610-279-1548 24/7 hotline 1-800-773-2424

**Police Notification Program (SAVIN Program)** This free service will inform you prior to a perpetrator of a crime against you being released from county prison along with important custody information. When you sign up you will be notified when the offender is released, transferred or escapes.

P: 1-866-972-7284 Website: [www.pacrimevictims.state.pa.us](http://www.pacrimevictims.state.pa.us)

## UNITED WAY 211

This is a national resource center that can be accessed a number of ways. Upon contacting them, you will then be given access to requested resources in the location of your choice, to include the following:

Crisis and Emergency Jobs and Support

Disaster Assistance Veterans Needs

Food and Health Reentry: from correctional, drug/alcohol, or mental health facility

Human Trafficking

ACCESS:

National Website: [www.211us.org](http://www.211us.org)/Local: 211 Website: [www.211sepa.org](http://www.211sepa.org)/Call: 1-866-964-9722

## BATTERER TREATMENT PROGRAMS

**Creative Health Services:** SAFE is a therapeutic group intervention for men who have been identified as domestic violence offenders. This intervention is designed to stop intimate relationship abuse, ensuring the safety of women and children while breaking the devastating cycle of domestic violence. CALL 610-326-9250 ext. 1197 [creativehs.org](http://creativehs.org)

**Menergy:** One of the oldest counseling programs in the country for men or women who have been abusive to an intimate partner. The Philadelphia-based program is rigorous but fair and the model is informed by developing research in the field. English and Spanish speakers can call 215-242-2235 for information. [www.menergy.org](http://www.menergy.org)