

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

The Victim Services Branch's mission is to provide supportive services for victims of crime as they navigate throughout the criminal justice system. For many, supportive services could mean helping to access the Crime Victims Compensation Program. For some, it means educating survivors on what to expect from members of law enforcement. And for others, it means identifying therapeutic services. Through it all,

our overall goal is to provide encouragement and foster strength to families affected by crime in the District of Co-

lumbia. From all of us at the Victim Services Branch thanks for allowing us to provide such a meaningful service.

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Tramaine Newsome
Stephen W. Wood
[Signature]
Ashley Rinaldi

Marlene Castro
Megan Riey
Carla Johnson
Jana White
Kelle Hall

Upcoming Events and Activities

January

National Stalking Awareness Month

In 2011, the White House issued the first Presidential Proclamation on National Stalking Awareness Month. President Obama's proclamation stressed the millions affected by the crime, its often-devastating consequences, the difficulty of identifying and investigating the crime, and the federal government's strong commitment to combating stalking. The 2012 proclamation elaborated on the dangers of stalking, and the importance of NSAM in building awareness about the crime. <http://victimsofcrime.org>

Visit www.StalkingAwarenessMonth.org for resources to help you plan events and outreach on stalking throughout the year. You will find an interactive quiz on stalking, magnets, fact sheets, guides, event ideas, and media tools to raise awareness about stalking.

February

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month!

Teen DV Month (sometimes called TDVAM) is a national effort to raise awareness about abuse in teen and 20-something relationships and promote programs that prevent it. Teen dating violence (TDV) is defined as a pattern of abuse or threat of abuse against teenaged dating partners, occurring in different forms, including verbal, emotional, physical, sexual and digital. TDV occurs across diverse groups and cultures. For more info, visit: <https://nrcdv.org/dvam/tdvam>

March

International Women's Day 2018 #PressforProgress

International Women's Day is not country, group or organization specific. The day belongs to all groups collectively everywhere. So together, let's all be tenacious in accelerating gender parity. Collectively, let's all Press for Progress. For more information, please visit: www.international-womensday.com

April

2018 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW)

Every year in April, OVC helps lead communities throughout the country in their annual observances of NCVRW, which will be observed in 2018 on April 8–14.

This year's theme — Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims — emphasizes the importance of inclusion in victim services and addresses —

- how the crime victims field can better ensure that every crime victim has access to services and support, and
- how professionals, organizations, and communities can work in tandem to reach all victims.

For more information, please visit: <https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/>

The national Sexual Violence Resource Center has announced the theme for the 2018 Sexual Assault Awareness Month campaign is "Embrace Your Voice"!

—Tramaine Newsome

Holiday Safety Tips for Seniors

It's that time of year again to celebrate the holiday season with good cheer, family, and friends. As most of us look forward to this time of year, the safety of the seniors in our community becomes tested as they become vulnerable to the hazards of accidents, cold weather and isolation.

According to Kyle Hill in Home Hero newsletter (2013), there are several ways that caregivers can help seniors avoid injury and illness during the holiday season. During the holidays, some seniors may try to push themselves harder. Whether it's shoveling snow or putting up those holiday lights and decorations, not being careful can lead to accidents — especially falls. Hill

offers the following safety tips for seniors:

Stay Safe:

- » Hire someone to shovel snow from walkways and driveways, or if possible, enlist the help of friends, family or caregivers
- » Make sure all outdoor walkways around the home are free of ice by using plenty of sand or salt to prevent falls.
- » Seniors who live alone can benefit from having a live-in caregiver. This is especially important for seniors with mental impairment.
- » Keep a good supply of food, extra blankets and medications. During power outages, caregivers and family members should check on seniors to make

sure they have everything they need.

- » During bad weather, caregivers should arrange for transportation for groceries or trips to the doctor.
- » Use flame-resistant decorations and keep power cords away from heavily travelled areas. Try not to leave lights on unattended.
- » Get help putting up holiday decorations.

By following these simple guidelines, seniors can make the most of enjoying this holiday season, while maintaining their health and safety.

For more information please visit the website at www.homehero.org/blog/health/the-holidays-safety-tips-for-seniors

—Helen Hall

The World of Domestic Violence for Men

Let's say good bye to the clogged minds and recognize that "Domestic Violence Does Exist for Men" in the world. For years, domestic violence has been viewed as a level of victimization wholly directed toward women. Often when domestic violence is discussed, it is an immediate assumption that the victims are women. Yes, it is true that one in three women have experienced or have been victims of domestic violence, but did you know — according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) — that one in seven men also have been victims of DV? Like women who have been affected by domestic violence, men encounter self-doubt and nervousness before seeking help

as well, and often are hesitant about reporting their abuse.

Society has built so many stereotypes when it comes to men that it makes it extremely uncomfortable for them to report their abuse with ease. History has manifested into believing that men should be able to sustain pain without complaining, should not show emotions because it signifies as weakness, and learn to deal with whatever challenges they encounter. These are just some of the different barriers that can stop men from reporting domestic violence. Unfortunately, because of this social construct, DV among males often goes underreported.

It is time to stop shaming and silencing men who are and have been abused. It is important that men who ex-

perience domestic violence are reminded that when they need help and take the necessary steps required to get it, this is not "weakness." Rather, taking the situation into their own hands is a sign of strength. Let's help our men in the world who are suffering as victims of domestic violence and provide them with the assistance they need.

If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, get help immediately. For more information and resources, feel free to contact the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) at www.ncadv.org or call the MPD Domestic Violence Unit at (202) 727-7137 or MPD Victim Services Branch (VSB) at (202) 724-4339.

—Dawn Christie, MSW, CA

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Resources

Should you or someone you know, need assistance locating services and resources, contact MPD's Victim Services Branch at **(202) 727-6007** or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at **(888) 373-7888** (24/7).

For a complete list of resources available in the DC metro area, visit: <https://cfsa.dc.gov/publication/human-trafficking-resource-guide>.

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month. While the concept may seem distant and impenetrable to our everyday lives, it is plausible that we encounter trafficking victims on a daily basis. It could be the young lady on the Metro train soliciting money, it could be the nail tech at your local salon, or the busser at the deli where you have lunch. It could be a student that attends school with your children. The point is trafficking occurs more than we are aware of; in ways that may appear normal on the surface. But anyone could be a victim. Trafficking victims do not fit into any stereotypical groups; victims can be of any gender, race, religion, age group, foreign nationals or U.S. citizens. That is why it is important that we identify what human trafficking is and how we can join the fight to end it.

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2017), "trafficking is the use of force, threat of force, fraud or coercion to recruit, harbor, transport, provide or obtain any person for labor or commercial sex or to cause a person under 18 to engage in a com-

mercial sex act" (www.justice.gov/usao-dc/human-trafficking). There are several types of trafficking, including:

- » **Forced Labor** — is work or service that is extorted from someone under the premise of a penalty being imposed and work or service that is not offered voluntarily.
- » **Sex Trafficking** — is when a person uses force, fraud or coercion to make a person commit a sexual act in exchange for money or other forms of compensation in which the trafficker benefits.
- » **Child Labor** — involves children in work that can be mentally and physically harmful to them and impedes on their freedom; including their ability to attend to school.
- » **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)** — is any form of sexual exploitation of a child for sex by an adult, ranging from sexual favors to commercial sexual exploitation, such as pornography and prostitution.

Traffickers utilize multiple methods of recruiting their victims including; social media, advertisement of false jobs, abduction, even recruitment through former trafficked victims. Victims are lured through the promise of protection, love, opportunity or other vows of a "better life". Once recruited, traffickers control their victims by means of using violence, fear, threats and intimidation to ensure victims comply. Trafficking can have significant, long-term, damaging effects on the victim. Human trafficking affects victims physically, psychologically, and emotionally.

How Can You Help?

In order for us to help victims of human trafficking, we must first understand the problem and educate ourselves on myths and misconceptions of it. You can help by learning the indicators of human trafficking so you can identify potential victims. For an extensive list of indicators, visit www.unodc.org. Another way you can help is by becoming a conscientious consumer and being aware of shopping products and companies that benefit from goods produced by child or forced labor (www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods/). Actively engage and educate your children on the issue and discuss prevention efforts. Participate in awareness campaigns; rather it is with a local organization or a social media initiative. Most importantly, if you suspect that someone is being trafficked, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline or local law enforcement to make a tip.

Resources

While we observe National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January, MPD is dedicated to supporting victims of human trafficking 365 days of the year. MPD's Victim Specialists provide supportive services and referrals to victims and survivors by linking them with wrap-around services that are crucial during the initial period after victimization has occurred. Fortunately, the District of Columbia has a vast array of community resources available to provide direct services to victims such as: advocacy, free sexual assault medical exams, temporary safe housing and relocation, free legal aid, and counseling resources.

— Ashley Rinaldi



A Look at MPD's 10th Annual Tree of Remembrance Celebration

On Saturday, December 2, 2017, the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch coordinated the 10th Annual Tree of Remembrance. This special event is dedicated to honoring homicide victims in the District of Columbia. As an intern with the Victim Services Branch, I had the privilege to be a part of making this year's event unique and special for each family in attendance. The commitment it took to contact each victim's family to personally invite them to the event was astounding. The staff put a lot of warmth and care in making personalized ornaments and collecting photos of each victim to create a slideshow.

Every year, The Tree of Remembrance offers comfort, hope and support to survivors during the holiday season. It serves as a reminder that the Metropolitan Police Department stands with them

in remembering and honoring their loved ones. Tears were shed, laughs were shared, and embraces were treasured throughout the event between families and members of the Department. Survivors were also able to connect and share their personal experiences with other survivors.

Participating in the Tree of Remembrance was one of the most rewarding opportunities I was blessed to be a part of. Working behind the scenes of

such an intricate, heart-warming event and seeing it unfold into a beautiful tribute is something I hope every intern has the opportunity to experience.

—Kelly Phelan
VSB Intern



Coping with the Death of a Co-Worker

Resources

For more information contact the American Psychological Association at **(800) 374-2721** or **(202) 336-5500**. TDD/TTY: **(202) 336-6123**.

Or visit www.apa.org.

For many, a co-worker can be an extended part of your family. Several important milestones are shared making them a part of both your work and personal lives. The death of a co-worker affects people in various ways, whether you were close with the person or not. The affects can become overwhelming and difficult to navigate alone.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), co-workers can experience several symptoms after the death of a colleague. The symptoms can range from the inability to concentrate, chronic fatigue, depression, lack of motivation, decrease productivity and low morale. The APA offers suggestions



on how colleagues can comfort and support each other through the grief process. Some suggestions include getting together as a group to share memories and/or have a memorial. Most importantly, give yourself permission

to grieve and if possible take advantage of your company's employee assistance program. For long term assistance consult a mental health professional.

—Marlene Castro

MPD Special Liaison Branch Fosters Positive Community Policing Relations

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Victim Services Branch (VSB) coordinated the Metropolitan Police Department's Next-of-Kin Meeting for open homicide cases from 2016-2017. The meetings were held during the week of October 2-6, 2017 at the Homicide Branch.

Approximately 31 fami-



lies took the opportunity to meet with a Homicide Detective to address their concerns

and questions regarding the investigation of their loved one's case. Additionally, VSB members provided resources, information and supportive services on domestic violence and healthy relationships. Families were also given information on Domestic Violence Awareness Month events held throughout the District to support domestic violence victims.

The Next-of-Kin Meetings are designed to empower and encourage survivors to take an active role in the investigative process. Future meetings will be held in April and June of 2018.

For more information contact the Victim Services Branch at **(202) 645-6363**.

—Megan Riley



Victim Services Branch in the Community

The Victim Services Branch (VSB) of the Metropolitan Police Department is eager to share our recent efforts to bring resources to the community as we build stronger relationships. Over the last several months, VSB have explored various opportunities to educate and engage the community on available services to victims of crime. VSB staff has increased resources and information to bring

awareness to those who have experience domestic violence, sexual assault, grief, gun violence, and victims of human trafficking.

Our goal is to continue to provide ongoing visibility, services and information to the communities we serve.

During 2017, VSB connected with other agencies that shared in our mission to take resources to communities, especially in high crime areas and marginalized communities. We kicked off the summer months by partnering with MPD's 6th District Police Station, My Sister's Place, and The DC Victim Hotline to provide domestic violence supportive services to residents in the Ward 7. In the fall, VSB participated in the Howard University Safety Fair and the Department of Human Service's Back to School

Event to bring awareness to college and school violence. Additionally, throughout Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we focus our efforts on the issue that "men can be victims too." We set up resource tables and conducted presentations at local gyms and men shelters. These are just a few ways that VSB has increased outreach efforts in the community. We have so much more to share and we look forward to seeing you in the community.

—Tiarra Laury-White



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