

'Now You Know Roundtable' Honors Stalking Awareness Month

Resources

■ **Metropolitan Police Department Domestic Violence Unit**
(202) 727-7137
<https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/domestic-violence-unit>

■ **Stalking Prevention, Awareness, & Resource Center (SPARC)**
SPARC ensures that allied professionals have the specialized knowledge to identify and respond to the crime of stalking.
www.stalkingawareness.org/external-resources

■ **LawHelp.org**
Created for people living on low-incomes and the legal organizations that serve them. Provides referrals to local legal aid and public interest law offices, basic information about legal rights, court forms and information, links to social service agencies, and more in your state.
www.lawhelp.org

■ **VictimConnect Resource Center**
A referral helpline where crime victims can learn about their rights and options confidentially and compassionately.
victimconnect.org

MPD Victim Services Branch "Now You Know Roundtable" honors Stalking Awareness Month

January 2022 marks the eighteenth annual National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM), an annual call to action to recognize and respond to the serious crime of stalking. Stalking and online/cyber stalking is a series of actions that make you feel afraid or in danger. Stalking is real and it can happen to anyone. Our speakers were **Dana Michelle Fleitman**, Associate Advisor, Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC) of AEquitas, and **Senior Sergeant Alberta Holden**, Paternity Warrant, Civil Protection Order and



Domestic Violence Units, Investigative Services Bureau, Criminal Investigation Division, Metropolitan Police Department.

The topics covered included:

- » Honoring Stalking Awareness month
- » Stalking – what it is and what to do
- » What to expect when you call the police

Takeaways for our audience included:

- » Remember, it's criminal, traumatic and dangerous.
- » Please report and if you don't know/aren't sure it's stalking, call the police anyway.

—Sharon Daugherty



Metropolitan Police Department
Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit
101 M Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

Ensuring your voices are heard, the Victim Services Branch continues to empower survivors throughout the criminal justice system. Specifically, the Metropolitan Police Department remains committed to helping to bring resolve to concerns of our communities in 2021

and beyond. As we make our way into a new year and a pandemic we are sending well wishes and peace to all families impacted by violence in the District of Columbia. It is our hope that our regards are received graciously. Take care.

Upcoming Events and Activities

Ongoing

The Mental Health Equity Forum

Thursday, January 13, 5:30 pm
It's free...and priceless. We are inviting everyone to learn that asking for help means you're strong. That's how you take back your power. You'll hear from experts who have devoted their lives to helping people thrive. Find, keep & nurture a healthy mind.

Sponsoring Organization:
United Planning Organization (UPO)

REGISTER: www.upo.org/equityforum

Foster Parent Information Sessions

Virtual Information Sessions: Every second Saturday 10:00–11:15 am; every last Thursday 6:00–7:15 pm
Children never outgrow their need for love and support. Help Children remain safely in their community. You can't imagine the reward!

Sponsoring Organization:
Child and Family Services Agency

REGISTER: www.FosterDCKids.org or call us at (202) 671-LOVE (5683)

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Family-to-Family Education Program

Every Thursday, 6 pm–9 pm
This is a free course for family members of those with serious mental illness. Attendees will learn about different mental illnesses and their causes, the various types of depression, problem solving, self-care, and fighting stigma. The class is led by trained family members who have experience.

Sponsoring Organization:
The National Presbyterian, 4101 Nebraska Avenue, NW

REGISTER:
namidc@namidc.org or (202) 546-0646

Family Connections

First Thursday of every month, 1:30 pm–2:30 pm
A virtual community for parents and caregivers who support loved ones facing substance use and/or mental health challenges. Families tell us they need credible resources, guidance to accessing help, and the opportunity

to connect with others facing similar challenges. Monthly gatherings will focus on a specific topic, provide tips and tools, and offer the opportunity to network with other families.

Sponsoring Organization:
National Family Support Technical Assistance Center

CONTACT:
info@nfstac.org or www.nfstac.org

PSA 702 Outreach Committee

Second Tuesday of Every Month, 2 pm
The Police Service Area 702 Outreach Committee meets the second Tuesday of every month at 2:00 pm by Zoom (with the exception of the month of August).

Sponsoring Organization:
PSA 702 Outreach Committee

CONTACT:
Brenda Richardson
(202) 678.1978
brendarichardson724@gmail.com

—Sharon Daugherty

Virtual Support Groups: What are Some Benefits?

Resources

For more information regarding the virtual support group, contact Dr. Renetta D. Weaver, LICSW, LCSW-C at (240) 416-9650 or visit <https://renettaweaver.com/contact>

According to Dr. Weaver, therapy cannot change the past and it cannot change what happened. But it can change what is happening inside of you and it can allow you to grieve. After 10 years of facilitating groups, Dr. Weaver has seen evidence that hurting people really can heal in the community. On Sundays afternoon, she facilitates a support group for those who are affected by gun violence. The group consists of education about managing grief and trauma with various discussion topics and activities.

Several members shared how the group is helping them navigate their grief journey:

Participant 1

- “This group has been helpful because it helps me to express myself; to relax; to hear others share exactly how I am feeling; I don’t plan anything before 2 PM because I need this group. My mind doesn’t have those racing thoughts when I’m in group.”

Participant 2

- “I need this group after the type of week I had. I don’t know if I would have survived as long as I have survived

Letters & Kudos

Share Your Story

Send a letter detailing your experiences — positive or negative — to victim.services@dc.gov or send via US Mail to:
 ■ Family Liaison Specialists Unit
 101 M Street SW
 Washington, DC 20024

Tree of Remembrance

I have attended the tree of remembrance ceremony in person for the past 13 years. I look forward to attending because it is a

feel good happy time for me. I get to see my sons picture on the big screen and I get a Christmas tree ornament. I have many ornaments on my tree with his name or pic of

him. My son **Raymond Rich** was my first born. I love him and I truly miss him.

—Debra R. Cooper.

AFFECTED BY GUN VIOLENCE?

It’s normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared, angry or numb. Learning about grief and talking to others can help.

REDUCE GRIEF RELATED ANXIETY AND STRESS

as best as you can with proper diet, adequate sleep and exercise, and social interaction with loved ones at home or online.



SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

for physical and mental health needs instead of using smoking, alcohol, drugs or other unhealthy choices to cope.

Zoom Group Sunday’s 12pm-2pm
 To register contact Dr. Renetta at 301-455-5032

Participant 3

- “I like this group because whether I listen or talk, I feel like everyone gets it. I feel safe here and I like coming here.”

—Carla Okonkwo

MURDERMISTAKEN, INC. Holiday Toy Drive 2021

Resources

For more information on how to provide assistance or register for MURDERMISTAKEN, Inc. Children’s Holiday Party next year, please contact **Shanda Smith** at (202) 446-9433 or email murdermistaken@yahoo.com.

The holiday season can be especially challenging for those who have lost a loved one to homicide. This season of celebration can produce a myriad of emotions and memories for those coping with grief and loss. Due to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, many survivors continue to experience financial pressures that make it challenging to provide gifts to their children during the holiday season.

For the past 13 years, homicide survivor and Founder of MURDERMISTAKEN, Inc., Ms. Shanda Smith worked tirelessly to organize a holiday

event to engage and empower the children and siblings of homicide victims. As a mother who experienced the death of two children: Rodney and Volante’ Smith on December 17, 1993, Shanda can

personally relate to the pain and struggle of supporting children after a tragic loss.

Though there was not a holiday party due to the ongoing pandemic, Ms. Smith did not want these grieving children to be forgotten. With the help of the DC Police



Foundation, MPD’s Homicide Branch, MPD’s Victim Services Branch, the DC Public Library, friends,



and other survivors, Ms. Smith was able to provide gifts for over 65 children this holiday season. Due to the restrictions of the pandemic, families scheduled appointments to pick up gifts from Ms. Smith at her home. Several volunteers also assisted with delivering gifts to those who were unable to travel to pick up toys.

Despite the challenges that the pandemic has brought over the past two years, we are thankful to all who helped make it possible to provide these children with some holiday cheer.

—Megan Riley

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Resources

For more information on this topic visit:

- www.state.gov/what-is-trafficking-in-persons
- <https://polarisproject.org>

In 2010, President Barack Obama designated January as the National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. The month is dedicated to raising awareness about trafficking and educating people to recognize the crime and report it. Human traffickers exploit and profit at the expense of an adult or a minor by forcing them to engage in forced labor or commercial sex.

According to the U.S Department of State, sex traffickers use force, fraud, or

coercion to compel a person to engage in commercial sex. Major events such as the Super Bowl are times when victims of sex trafficking are most at risk. Traffickers look for victims at popular hangout spots such as malls and schools vicinity. The National Human Trafficking Hotline receives most of its calls on Super Bowl weekend perhaps because the hotline is better advertised during the event.

Since human and sex trafficking victims are not always hidden or kept

away from the public, as a community we must educate ourselves to look for the warning signs. Some of the signs to look for are:

- » Appearing malnourished
- » Signs of physical injuries
- » Avoiding eye contact, social interaction
- » Lack of identification documents
- » Checking into hotels/motels with older males
- » Underage works
- » Unable to visit public places alone or speak for themselves

—Marlene Castro