



Featured in this issue: *The Ursula Forem Fellowship*

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From the Executive Director



We hope you are enjoying the summer months and warmer weather. This issue of the bulletin is particularly meaningful, as it is dedicated to the work and memory of former OPDV colleague Ursula Forem. Though her life was cut tragically short, her work and dedication to domestic violence prevention continues to impact New Yorkers every day through the many resources and programs she developed, and through her tireless advocacy for domestic violence services, resources, and training.

In 2015, New York State chose to honor Ursula's commitment to domestic violence prevention by creating the Ursula Forem Domestic Violence Program Employment Fellowship to fund recent college graduates interested in working with local domestic violence agencies across the state.

This bulletin's feature article, "The Ursula Forem Domestic Violence Program Employment Fellowship," by OPDV's Forem Fellowship coordinator Joan Faxon, describes the program's goals and its positive impact in the two communities currently receiving funding. In our Q&A, current Forem fellows Amanda Bow and Isabella Velázquez-Booker discuss their roles at the local level, and how each of their programs are applying the funding to provide enhanced services and resources within their communities.

Also of particular note in this issue is the information at the top of Page 4 regarding the New York State Domestic Incident Report (DIR). We are pleased to announce that, after extensive review and revision, the new DIR form has been distributed for use by law enforcement statewide.

As always, we thank you for your continued partnership and we wish you a safe and happy summer.

Gwen Wright

Domestic Violence and the Workplace: A Handbook for Employers

Domestic violence compromises the safety of thousands of employees every day, with tragic, destructive, often fatal outcomes.

OPDV has created "Domestic Violence and the Workplace: A Handbook for Employers" to help employers create an informed, supportive workplace culture and to assist managers, supervisors and coworkers in recognizing signs of domestic violence and enhancing workplace safety. In addition to providing an overview of the nature and dynamics of domestic violence, the Handbook addresses workplace safety, security and liability, and legal responsibilities, and provides guidance on developing a workplace domestic violence policy and safety plan.

The New York State Department of Labor collaborated with OPDV to develop a card promoting the availability of the Handbook. The card will be sent to all new businesses in New York State. A poster providing contact information for domestic violence assistance is also available for businesses to download, customize and display.

All materials are available free of charge on the OPDV website, and copies of the Handbook can be ordered here.

1-800-942-6906
NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline

Confidential • 24 HRS/7 DAYS
English & español, multi-language Accessibility
711: Deaf or Hard of Hearing
In NYC: 311 or 1-800-621-HOPE (4673)
TDD: 1-800-810-7444

Shine the Light!

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. What are you planning for 2016?

The Great New York State Fair!

It's that time of year again. The Great New York State Fair will be August 25-September 5, 2016 in Syracuse, NY. If you go, make sure to stop by the OPDV booth, located in the Science and Industry Building. We'd love to see you there!

Did You Know...

According to the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, in 2014, Family Violence Option (FVO) waivers were granted to 9,710 applicants under the Temporary Assistance Program, representing a 12% decrease from 2013.

This information was taken from the 2014 NYS Domestic Violence Dashboard.

The Ursula Forem Domestic Violence Program Employment Fellowship

by Joan Faxon, Domestic Violence Program Administrator and Forem Fellowship Coordinator, NYS OPDV

The Ursula Forem Domestic Violence Program Employment Fellowship was created to expand the capacity of community-based domestic violence services as well as inform the State of the needs and challenges faced by those programs. Many domestic violence programs struggle to provide services that address the long-term needs of victims in attaining independence and safety from their abusive partners. These vital services address such needs as economic stability, safe permanent housing, health and well-being and employment assistance.

The first two 2-year Fellowships were awarded in 2015 to the [YWCA of Genesee County, Inc.](#) and the [North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence](#). While both programs are providing well-rounded experiences for their Fellows, including training, advocacy, case management and community outreach, each of the fellows is working on specific projects within their agencies.

The YWCA of Genesee County, Inc. fellow, Amanda Bow, has focused on developing and implementing a trauma-informed and evidenced-based support group for victims of domestic violence, and has developed a mentor program to assist participants in the support group. In addition, Ms. Bow collaborates with [Genesee County Child Protective Services](#) and the [Justice for Children Advocacy Center](#) on developing and implementing trauma-informed and evidenced-based support group services for children who witness domestic violence.

Ms. Bow reports that the experience has been “inspiring.” “Working with these women and watching them day by day recover and grow from this unfortunate situation gives me hope that no matter how sour of a lemon life deals you, a helping hand can be just what you need to make lemonade. The most rewarding part is being that helping hand. I have tremendous respect for the women I work with and running the support group that was a part of this grant has become the highlight of my week.”

Ms. Jeanne Walton, Executive Director of the YWCA of Genesee County, Inc., reports that the grant has been an incredible opportunity to expand services throughout the county. In addition, “the direct interaction between clients in support group and mentors/mentees that was established with this grant funding has added dimension to our program that provides clients with the ongoing support they need and ultimately with the strength they need to move on and make real changes in their lives.”

The North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence fellow, Isabella Velazquez, has focused on developing and implementing 15 one-hour training sessions on different topics related to domestic violence through the use of best practices and evidence-based intervention methods. In addition, Isabella will be conducting an extensive evaluation of services in the community, recommending creative solutions to fill the identified gaps.

Ms. Velazquez shared that the position has allowed her to work within various community systems. This has widened her understanding of the obstacles victims face when interacting with the courts, law enforcement, social services, etc. “My hope for the rest of the Ursula Forem Fellowship is to continue to grow and identify my strengths to best incite change on a larger policy level to challenge norms that negatively affect our communities.”

Patricia Ross, Executive Director of the North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence states that “The Coalition is so grateful for the Fellowship as it has enabled us to broaden our community outreach and education efforts. The Fellowship has allowed us to develop trainings on topics such as Safety Planning, Cultural Competency and Domestic Violence, Healthy/Unhealthy Relationships, to name a few, all of which affect the communities we service. Additionally, our fellow has been a powerful advocate for our survivors and has a very sharp eye when it comes to identifying the obstacles and injustices faced by survivors.”

OPDV is proud to be working with our two current Fellowship partners, and to announce that the 2016-2018 Fellowships have been awarded to the following:

- [Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc](#) – The fellow will become a specialist in trauma-informed care with elder domestic violence abuse clients; and
- [Sanctuary for Families, Inc.](#) – The fellow will provide direct services for underserved populations through community partnerships, collaboration, outreach and training.

The Fellowship’s seven primary goals:

- Expand personal excellence in the domestic violence community.
- Develop domestic violence program professionals who are educated, experienced and committed to addressing the full spectrum of issues facing victims of domestic violence and their families.
- Enhance the capacity of community-based organizations providing domestic violence services.
- Collect information to inform state and local funding and policy directions.
- Enhance collaboration between domestic violence programs and other service systems.
- Provide employment opportunities in these challenging fiscal times.
- Provide a State-sponsored training* on the impact various systems have on domestic violence.

**The training is mandatory for the Fellows, and open to all NYS domestic violence service providers.*

Q&A: The 2015-2016 Ursula Forem Fellows

This Q&A was conducted with Amanda Bow, LMHC-P, Ursula Forem Fellow and Domestic Violence Liaison at the YWCA of Genesee County and Isabella Velázquez-Booker, Victim Advocate and Ursula Forem Fellow at the North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence

Q What is your DV background?

A Bow: During my Master's studies, I interned as a mental health counselor at Genesee Community College, assisting with Title IX cases and providing relationship counseling, safety planning and victim advocacy.

Velázquez-Booker: I came to this position with personal DV experience and my belief that violence against women is too prevalent. I was eager to develop and employ skills in direct services, community organizing, and creating and conducting trainings.

Q What are some challenges?

A Bow: Getting clients to utilize our satellite offices is challenging. My supervisor and I have brainstormed alternative strategies and locations.

Velázquez-Booker: The lack of coordination in client resources. In response, I have created a centralized, regularly updated list of local contacts for services like preventive care, legal help, child welfare and child care. I also utilize supervision to remind myself that I must not take on full responsibility for clients' choices and outcomes.

Q What has surprised you most about the fellowship?

A Bow: Bonding with clients. I've seen them at their most vulnerable and have done my best to help them find safety, stability and happiness.

Velázquez-Booker: The variety and diversity of my role. One day, I escorted a client to sell a phone, buy food for herself and her children, and then I took her to the train. She was unfamiliar with the area and had few resources after fleeing her

home state to escape abuse. I never imagined that walking with someone to a train station could be a form of advocacy.

Q What services do you provide?

A Bow: I assist with court accompaniment and family offense and custody/support petitions/modifications. I also run a weekly women's support group, connect clients to county resources, collaborate with attorneys, and facilitate transportation and safe housing access.

Velázquez-Booker: I make frequent calls to the Human Resources Administration (HRA) for information about One Shot Deal, child support enforcement, and challenging SSI decisions. I also assist with child care, letters of advocacy, and safety planning.

Q How do you define your role?

A Bow: I am a case manager, coordinator, counselor, cheerleader, and personal assistant. I am whoever my client needs in that moment.

Velázquez-Booker: I advocate in all parts of the system, by phone and in-person, and often write letters testifying to clients' needs for resources. I hold a physically and emotionally safe space for my clients, while fighting for them to have their own safe spaces as well.

Q Do you work with other Systems?

A Bow: I work with agencies like social services, CPS, GCASA (drug and alcohol treatment center), attorneys, and law enforcement to collaboratively address client needs.



Amanda Bow



Isabella Velázquez-Booker

Velázquez-Booker: I work with law enforcement to provide training during roll calls and to assist clients in filing Domestic Incident Reports. I also refer clients to various service agencies, which has allowed me to familiarize myself with different organizations and the services they provide. Most of my clients are receiving some form of public assistance, and often need help navigating various systems.

Q What might Ursula consider most essential about this fellowship?

A Bow: Our weekly women's support group is a safe space for clients in all stages of transition from initial crisis through the court process, and it helps women with parenting, self-growth, and new relationships. As an advocate of more long-term services for clients, Ursula would be proud of this resource, and impressed by clients' testimonies. A client once told me that the group "gave her the strength to be her old self again."

Velázquez-Booker: The education I have provided and the training I have received have been the most essential. I think Ursula would appreciate that not only am I educating and serving the community, I am learning as much as possible from this opportunity.

The New York State Domestic Incident Report: Revised

The Domestic Incident Report (DIR) must be completed by all NYS police officers responding to a domestic incident. Upon completion, all DIRs outside NYC are sent to the [NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services](#) (DCJS) for inclusion in the Domestic Incident Report Repository (DIRR), to be used by dispatchers, police, DAs, and community supervision agencies for cross-jurisdictional information, officer safety, investigations, prosecutions, and supervision. The [NYS Office of Victim Services](#) (OVS) also uses the DIR for victim compensation cases, and civil legal services attorneys use them to support

their clients' needs.

The DCJS [Office of Public Safety](#) consulted with [OPDV](#), The [NYS Office of Information Technology Services](#) (ITS), and a working group including OVS, the [NYS Dept. of Corrections and Community Supervision](#), [NYS Police](#), [NYPD](#), local prosecutors, law enforcement, probation, civil legal service attorneys and advocates, to develop a new DIR form, which was rolled out statewide in April, 2016.

The new form provides more accurate, accessible information about DV cases and ongoing patterns of abuse, and aims to enhance victim safety and offender accountability.

The form was amended to:

- provide a thorough understanding of the immediate domestic incident
- aid in the capabilities of the DIRR
- ask specific questions about strangulation and increased physical danger
- allow for the eventual electronic submissions of DIRs to DCJS.

In early 2016, the form was piloted in two counties in the Capital Region; police officers were surveyed and advocates provided feedback.

View [information about the DIR](#), including training opportunities for law enforcement.

Ursula Forem: Advocate. Colleague. Legacy.



Although Ursula Forem began her state career in 1998 as a Program Administrator for Community Coordination at OPDV, her spirit

of collaboration and her passion for improving domestic violence services to the most vulnerable members of our community started long before then.

In 1990, Ursula started working for Orange County Safe Homes Project as a shelter night manager and office

counselor advocate, but was soon promoted to Director of Prevention, Intervention and Education Services.

Ursula was committed to educating others about DV and its impact on victims, perpetrators, and entire communities. Her efforts and experience made her a natural fit for OPDV's Community Coordination position.

On February 22, 2001, Ursula left OPDV in Albany to drive to her home in Newburgh. As she travelled south on the NYS Thruway, the flurries that had started that afternoon turned to heavy snow. Near Kingston, her car veered off the road and into the median. The accident that took her life that night left

a huge void in the domestic violence field, and in the OPDV family.

In 2015, New York State established The Ursula Forem Domestic Violence Program Employment Fellowship to expand the capacity of community-based domestic violence programs by funding recent college graduates pursuing careers in the field of domestic violence prevention.

Ursula's focus, dedication and creativity have forever impacted victims, service providers, policy makers and colleagues at both state and local levels. This fellowship is a testament to her spirit, and to her legacy that keeps on giving.

Domestic Violence Initiative for Faith Communities

In 2015, Governor Cuomo created the [Office of Faith-Based Community Development Services](#) as part of his ongoing commitment to support nonprofits and better serve communities across the State. Intended as a statewide informational resource, the Office assists faith-based organizations with:

- applying for grants from state agencies
- building their capacity to better serve

and sustain their communities

- creating a network to enhance coordinated efforts, build coalitions and develop effective partnerships among faith communities statewide.

In an effort to support and enhance the Governor's efforts, OPDV has formed a working group with The Office of Faith-Based Community Development Services and the [New York Theological Seminary](#) on a faith initiative that will engage faith leaders and students, to

determine what tools and information would help them identify and respond to domestic violence within their faith communities.

The working group intends to develop a set of guidelines and resources for faith leaders. The group will also host two events - one in Albany and one in NYC - in October 2016, designed specifically for faith leaders, to discuss the initiative and the dissemination of the guidelines to all faith communities statewide.

NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence www.opdv.ny.gov

Please send any comments or content ideas to: opdvbulletin@opdv.ny.gov

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