



NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Stigma Impacts Domestic Violence Survivors

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, an opportunity to raise awareness of the pervasiveness of domestic violence in our community and remind survivors that they are not alone.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone at any time and impacts individuals of all races and ethnicities, religions, socio-economic statuses and gender identities. It occurs in rural, suburban, and urban communities.

According to Sara Grady, LMSW, director, domestic violence prevention and intervention services, Child & Family Services Haven House, stigma greatly impacts victims reaching out for help.

"We hear from victims often that they experience feelings of shame, guilt, and responsibility related to being a domestic violence victim," Grady said. "This is why it is so important to widely educate our community that domestic violence is never the victim's fault. Nothing that a victim does warrants them experiencing abuse. Nothing."

Grady explains that domestic violence and abuse occur because the perpetrator makes a choice to abuse the victim in order to gain and maintain power and control over the victim. It is also so important to share information about the prevalence of domestic violence because of the stigma that can exist around being a domestic violence victim.

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In addition, victims commonly experience depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and complex trauma as a result of their domestic violence.

For individuals who have an existing mental health diagnosis such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, domestic violence can greatly exacerbate their systems.

“There is a great deal of stigma around domestic violence and mental illness,” said Jessica Stritzinger, supervising counselor, advocate department, Crisis Services. “While we have made some progress as a society, the stigma of domestic violence is still prevalent. Survivors may be afraid to ask friends, family or their doctor for help because they are ashamed or embarrassed,” she said.

According to the Stritzinger, there is a correlation between mental illness and domestic violence, but combined services are currently not available.

This is especially challenging during the pandemic as incidences of domestic violence have increased.

“Our crisis hotline has seen a huge increase in calls,” she said. “We normally experience 600-700 calls per month, since the pandemic began, we are receiving upwards of 1,000-1,100 calls.”

New text/chat lines have been added by New York State to support domestic violence survivors during the pandemic. You can reach the NYS Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-942-6909, or text 844-997-2121.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month is important because it provides the opportunity to educate the community about the prevalence of domestic violence and the resources available in the community to assist victims of domestic violence and family and friends who may be concerned that a loved one is experiencing domestic violence.

Anyone – a victim or someone concerned about someone they care about – can reach out to domestic violence service providers for support, safety planning, education, and resources.

Haven House is available 24/7 by phone at 716-884-6000 or chat at [on their website](#).

“It’s really important for folks to understand that anyone can be a victim of domestic violence,” Grady said. “While statistics show that anywhere from 85-95% of domestic violence survivors are women, we know that men are also impacted by domestic violence. Domestic violence is also more prevalent than people may realize – 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men in the US will experience domestic violence in their lifetime.”

Most likely, everyone knows someone who has been affected by domestic violence. ■

THE ADVOCATE PROGRAM OF CRISIS SERVICES

The Advocate Program of Crisis Services provides confidential response and support for survivors of rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, family violence and elder abuse – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Advocate Program is committed to empowering survivors of domestic/family/sexual violence and elder abuse without discrimination. We strive to reduce the impact of violence and build a safer community.

24 Hour Erie County Domestic Violence Hotline
716-862-HELP
For Shelter: 716-884-6000

24-Hour NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline
1-800-942-6906
Text: 844.997.2121

Visit cfsbny.org/our-services/hh/hh-chat to learn more.

HAVEN HOUSE

Haven House provides services for survivors including emergency shelter in a confidential location, long-term transitional housing, and counseling to help individuals cope with the pain and trauma of violence in the home.

24/7 by phone at 716-884-6000 or chat at *Haven House Chat System* by visiting cfsbny.org/our-services/hh/hh-chat

Visit cfsbny.org/our-services/hh to learn more.



A Q&A with Horizon Health Services

Horizon Health Services offers comprehensive, person-centered care for the treatment of mental health and substance use disorders. Patients and their families collaboratively embark on a journey towards change and wellness.

Services include outpatient, detox, crisis stabilization and rehabilitation — residential treatment at the Horizon Village Sanborn Campus.

Horizon provides ongoing care for individuals following treatment to prevent relapse and serve as a support system for the individual, family and loved ones. Horizon ensures that all individuals and families are supported after residential treatment, detox or outpatient therapy, offering job skills and vocational services, home health care, and other case management services.

Horizon staff members recently shared an update on their work and reducing the stigma of mental illness.

Why did your organization become a member of The Anti-Stigma coalition?

Horizon is proud to be a member of The Anti-Stigma Coalition. This is a vital resource for our community that emphasizes the need to continue to build local networks, cultivate community relationships to share resources and provide education and access to support our community and those struggling with mental health disorders.

How does the campaign align with your work?

As we know, millions of people in the U.S. are affected by mental illness each year. At Horizon, it's important for us to measure how common mental illness is and how we can provide continued services and treatment resources for our patients and their families.

We know that effective treatment makes recovery from behavioral health disorders possible. The Anti-Stigma campaign has continued the conversation around mental illness in our WNY community and because of this, more community members are bringing their concerns to the forefront, reaching out for help and becoming more open to having these conversations due to the visibility of this campaign.

What impact is the Campaign having in the community?

The disease of mental illness presents an urgent public health crisis and impacts families in every neighborhood of our community.

Education, prevention and treatment are the most effective weapons. This campaign brings the availability of education and support to our community members and we are beyond lucky to have this collaboration and awareness as we work together to provide hope and healing to those in need each and every day. ■



BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ERIE COUNTY ANTI-STIGMA COALITION

Does your organization, church, temple, or community group want to combine forces with our organization? Do you individually want to engage with us to stop the stigma of mental illness? Please consider becoming a member of our Coalition by completing our membership form at letstalkstigma.org/support/pledge.

It is going to take a massive community effort to move the needle on stigma, please become a part of the solution. Questions? Please contact Karl Shallowhorn, Chairperson, at kshallowhorn@chcb.net.

October Events

NOW THROUGH OCTOBER 4

American Sign Language (ASL) T-shirt Sale
Deaf Access Services, an affiliate of People Inc

OCTOBER 8

Facebook Live: Back in Session
The Emotional Roller Coaster for Students, Parents and Teachers in the New School Year

OCTOBER 14

Virtual Candidates Hour - Buffalo Area
DDAWNY

OCTOBER 15

Virtual Candidates Hour - Rochester/Finger Lakes
DDAWNY

OCTOBER 15 - NOVEMBER 1

Virtual Irish Classical Theatre
Deaf Access Services, an affiliate of People Inc

OCTOBER 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29

Buffalo Center for Health Equity Mental & Emotional Wellbeing During COVID-19 Series

OCTOBER 7 & 21

Virtual Adult Mental Health First Aid Training
Community Health Center of Buffalo

VETERANS ONE-STOP CENTER OF WNY EVENTS

During these unpredictable times, visit our events page at

LETSTALKSTIGMA.ORG/EVENTS

For information about mental wellness, stigma and self-care.

OCTOBER 8 IS NATIONAL DEPRESSION SCREENING DAY

Depression is real, common, and treatable. Don't let stigma prevent you from getting help for depression. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, major depressive disorder affects more than 16.1 million American adults, or about 6.7 of the U.S. population age 18 and older.

Take a few minutes to complete a screening survey from Mental Health Advocates of WNY.

Take the survey at eriemha.org/test-your-mood.php

BECOME AN INCLUSIVE EMPLOYER

People Inc. is seeking new businesses in Western New York and the Greater Rochester region to employ people with disabilities year-round. People Inc. helps companies create jobs around a person's talents and interests. Hiring a qualified person with a disability brings greater benefits beyond just filling an open job. Contact Jim Scutt at 716.817.5750 or jscutt@people-inc.org.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS



One-of-a-kind services for one-of-a-kind people.

Visit letstalkstigma.org/current-members for more information on our current members.

ERIE COUNTY
ANTI-STIGMA
COALITION

Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition Founding Members:

BryLin Behavioral Health System • Children's Mental Health Coalition of Western New York, Inc.
Community Partners of Western New York • Compeer • Crisis Services of Erie County
Erie County Department of Mental Health • Erie County Office for People with Disabilities
Fellows Action Network • Fuerst Consulting Corporation • Jewish Family Service of Buffalo & Erie County
The Mental Health Advocates of WNY • Millennium Collaborative Care • Patrick P. Lee Foundation
Preventionfocus, Inc. • Telesco Creative Group • The Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation