



**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF
CRIME PREVENTION, YOUTH,
AND VICTIM SERVICES**

**Governor's Family Violence Council 2023
Annual Report**

Executive Order 01.01.2012.05 F; MSAR #9421

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Roster of Members

The Governor's Family Violence Council is composed of various members, and a Chair and a Vice-Chair (vacant) appointed by Governor Moore.

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Introduction

In accordance with Executive Order 01.01.2012.05 F, the Governor's Family Violence Council must submit a report to the Governor by December 1 of each year, as it relates to the status of family violence in Maryland and to recommend improvements to the State's activities to prevent family violence.

Under the leadership of Chairwoman Jeanne Yeager and former Vice-Chairwoman Dorothy Lennig, this *Governor's Family Violence Council 2023 Annual Report* includes information on abuse intervention program certification, access to benefits for immigrant survivors, stalking prevention, and the creation of a survivor advisory council.

Background

As required by Executive Order 01.01.2012.05, the Governor's Family Violence Council is charged with the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Advise the Governor through the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services on matters related to family violence.
2. Identify and analyze State policies and programs relating to family violence, including but not limited to:
 - a. Collecting data from State agencies relating to the prevention and reduction of domestic violence and related family violence;
 - b. Identifying resources available to reduce and prevent family violence through a statewide coordinated effort; and
 - c. Identifying opportunities for collaboration between governmental units.
3. Examine, or cause to be examined, the relationship between family violence and other societal problems, including but not limited to juvenile delinquency, alcohol and substance abuse, truancy, and future criminal activity.
4. Identify best practices, research, and information pertaining to abuser intervention and related programs.
5. Propose to the Governor, through the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services, legislative, regulatory, and policy changes to reduce and prevent the incidence of domestic violence and related family violence, to protect victims and to punish perpetrators.
6. Perform such other duties and functions as may be appropriate and necessary for the Governor's Family Violence Council to address and implement the provisions of this Executive Order.

It also requires the Governor's Family Violence Council to submit a report to the Governor by December 1 of each year, as it relates to family violence in Maryland and recommendations to prevent such violence.

Governor's Family Violence Council

In accordance with Executive Order 01.01.2012.05 F, this *Governor's Family Violence Council 2023 Annual Report* provides timely and accurate information on family violence with recommendations to reduce and eliminate abusive behaviors. Under the leadership of Chairwoman Jeanne Yeager and former Vice-Chairwoman Dorothy Lennig, and with the support of staff from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services, the Governor's Family Violence Council embarked upon a variety of projects to improve accountability, awareness, and research in statewide family violence policy over the past year.

Building on the success from prior years, the Governor's Family Violence Council utilizes a framework in which members choose, by majority vote, two or three key areas of a family violence prevention strategy. Historically, the member who raises the focus area or issue will lead the workgroup addressing that issue over the duration of one year. At the conclusion of each year, the workgroup(s) presents their findings and recommendations to the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services for consideration and implementation.

In 2023, the following four workgroups addressed programs and activities related to preventing family violence:

- The [Abuse Intervention Program Certification Workgroup](#) developed a flowchart to outline the certification process for current and new programs.
- The [Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors Workgroup](#) disseminated a survey to programs that serve immigrant survivors in order to identify challenges to accessing help and guide efforts to make victim services more inclusive of immigrant survivors' needs.
- The [Stalking Prevention Workgroup](#) identified an increase in the number of domestic violence protective orders that were obtained on the grounds of stalking since the [2022 expansion of the stalking statute](#).
- The [Survivor Advisory Council Workgroup](#) developed a plan to hold focus groups with survivors to learn about issues in services and programming, areas for improvement, experiences with sharing their stories and input, and recommendations for their engagement in ongoing advocacy as well as system reform/improvement.

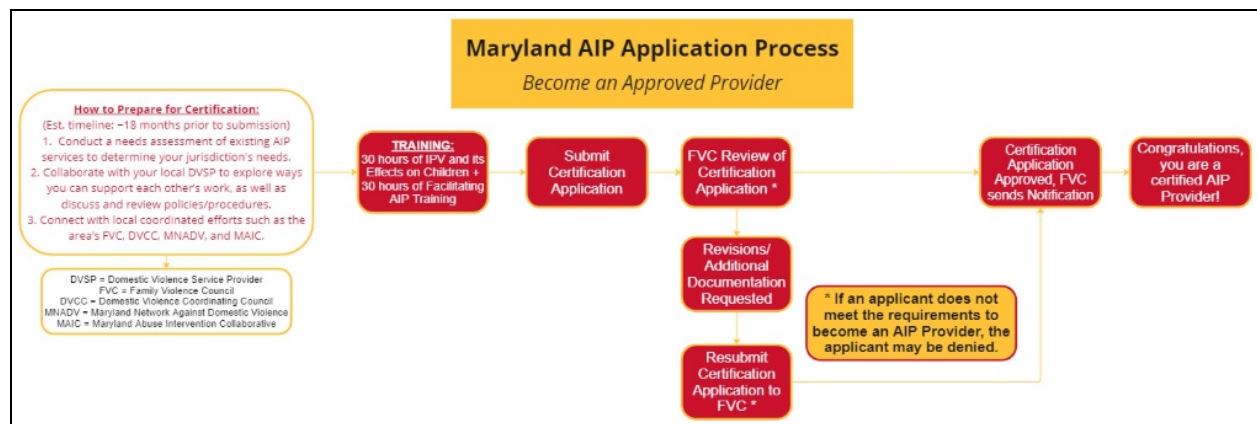
The Governor's Family Violence Council will continue to pursue the efforts of the four workgroups in State FY 2024, in addition to reinstating the Abusers Not Meeting Conditions of Court Orders Workgroup.

FY 2023 Areas of Study

In FY 2023, the Governor's Family Violence Council (Council) continued to address issues related to domestic violence to provide the Governor with timely and accurate information on family violence, and to make recommendations to reduce and eliminate abusive behaviors. The Council also collaborated with its partners to address key areas of family violence: abuse intervention program certification, access to benefits for immigrant survivors, stalking prevention, and a survivor advisory council (*as described below*).

Abuse Intervention Program Certification

The Abuse Intervention Program (AIP) Certification Workgroup developed a flowchart to outline the AIP certification process for current and new programs (*as illustrated below*). The workgroup also discussed several areas of the AIP guidelines, to include the waitlist policy, attendance policy, and training. The workgroup will continue to review the guidelines each year and make recommendations when necessary. In addition, and in consultation with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, the workgroup discussed the creation of an AIP brochure to provide information on abuse intervention programs. The workgroup will also partner with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence on statewide training efforts for referral sources and partners on the importance and efficacy of abuse intervention programs.



Maryland AIP Application Process Flowchart

(<https://goccp.maryland.gov/victim-services/family-violence-council/abuse-intervention/>).

Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors

The Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors Workgroups will develop recommendations on benefit access for immigrant survivors of domestic violence. To accomplish this, the workgroup will examine Maryland's benefit policies and laws in comparison to other states, the gaps and barriers that immigrant survivors face when accessing services, the U visa certification process

and how/if it is working, and how immigrant survivors access criminal injuries compensation and the associated barriers.

In May 2023, the workgroup disseminated a survey to programs that serve immigrant survivors to identify the gaps in services and barriers that immigrant survivors face and challenges that victim service providers experience when serving immigrant survivors. The workgroup received 40 survey responses from non-profit victim service organizations and state's attorney's offices, representing all 24 Maryland jurisdictions. Based on the survey results, respondents identified domestic violence as the most frequent type of abuse or criminal act experienced by immigrant survivors, followed by sexual assault, child abuse, protective order violation, rape, and human trafficking. When serving immigrant survivors, the respondents identified Spanish as the most common language, followed by French, Creole or Cajun; Arabic; Persian, Farsi, Dari or Pashto; and Amharic, Somali or Other Afro-Asiatic languages.

When asked to rank the level of difficulty experienced by immigrant survivors when accessing services, respondents listed language access, transportation, and obtaining an identification card as the readily accessible services. They listed housing assistance (permanent, accompaniment, transitional), legal services (family/civil), and U and T Visa certification as hard-to-access services. Respondents also listed the following barriers that immigrant survivors encounter when accessing services: survivors do not know they are eligible for help, inability to access an interpreter, and inability to access services due to immigration status.

When asked to rank the level of difficulty experienced by immigrant survivors when accessing public benefits, respondents listed the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), crisis shelter, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as the most accessible benefits. The least accessible public benefits consisted of permanent and transitional housing and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Respondents also listed the following barriers that immigrant survivors encounter when accessing public benefits: survivors do not know they are eligible for help available, inability to access benefits due to lack of documentation or immigration status, and inability to access an interpreter.

The survey results also showed that the state police and state's attorney's offices were more likely to sign a U or T visa certification when compared to sheriff's offices, local police departments, judges, the Department of Labor, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and Child or Adult Protective Services.

In addition, respondents identified the following topics for additional training: U and T visa certification, immigration options for victims, legal services, trauma-informed and culturally relevant assistance, immigrant rights in the state judicial system, refugee and asylee victims, language access, protective orders for immigrant victims, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

(SIJS), and housing options. Training was recommended for victim advocates and victim service organizations, attorneys, and agencies that certify U and T visas.

Based on the survey results, the workgroup plans to hold three webinars in late 2023 focusing on language access and U and T visa certification. Two webinars will address U and T visa certification; one will be provided for the agencies that certify the visas and one will be for the victim advocates who assist survivors in obtaining a visa. The third webinar will address language access for victim advocates and attorneys.

Stalking Prevention

The Stalking Prevention Workgroup will examine stalking laws in Maryland and how they may be improved to enhance the safety of victims and survivors. The workgroup will also examine the connection between lethality and stalking in order to address this issue at the state level. To accomplish this, the workgroup will explore the nexus between stalking and homicides, the nexus between stalking and protective orders, and investigations to provide recommendations to improve the safety of victims and survivors in Maryland.

[Section 3–802 of the Criminal Law Article](#) expanded the definition of stalking in Maryland to include conduct that occurs in person, by electronic communication, or through the use of a device that can pinpoint or track the location of another without the person’s knowledge or consent. In addition, [§ 3–207 of the Public Safety Article](#) requires law enforcement to complete entrance-level and in-service police training on criminal laws concerning stalking as they pertain to electronic surveillance or tracking.

Given the expanded definition of stalking, the workgroup gathered publicly available data on protective and peace orders issued in Maryland to identify its impact on victims and survivors. In addition, the workgroup examined access to protective orders because of known barriers to obtaining protective orders (e.g., lack of documentation). Between January 2023 and August 2023, based on the [State’s protective and peace order data](#), the workgroup identified assault (n = 1,929) as the most common reason for a domestic violence protective order, followed by fear of harm (n = 1,598), and stalking (n = 344). As shown in **Table 1**, the number of orders obtained due to stalking increased in 2023, as a result of its expanded definition which includes electronic communication.

Table 1: Protective Orders Issued in Maryland (Year-to-Year Comparison)*		
	Average Percentage of Issuing Temporary and Final Protective Order due to Stalking	Total Number of Orders
January - August 2022	6.9%	311
January - August 2023	7.7%	344

*Data was retrieved from the [Maryland Courts Domestic Violence Monthly Reports](#).

The workgroup researched stalking laws for each state and identified that every state but Maryland has some form of a felony charge for stalking, although Maryland's sentence for misdemeanor stalking is somewhat equivalent to felony stalking charges in other states. Maryland also lacks a law on aggravated stalking or escalating the seriousness of the offense when someone has previously been convicted of stalking. This information was gathered from the [Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center \(SPARC\)](#).

To build on these efforts, the workgroup will continue to gather data, identify training needs, propose legislation and partner with relevant stakeholders such as the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association to improve the safety of victims and survivors in Maryland.

Survivor Advisory Council

The Survivor Advisory Council Workgroup researched models for advanced survivor involvement in human trafficking sectors to adapt for domestic violence survivor involvement. Human trafficking councils make an effort to include survivors in their advocacy efforts, and the workgroup researched a framework for a separate survivor council within the Council in order to support survivors' voices and gather their input to guide system reform and responses to domestic violence.

The workgroup also developed a plan to hold focus groups with survivors to learn from them regarding:

- Issues in services and programming
- Areas for improvement in services and programming
- Experiences with sharing their stories and input
- Recommendations for engagement in ongoing advocacy and system reform/improvement

The workgroup will partner with the comprehensive domestic violence programs to inform survivors about the focus groups. Focus groups will be scheduled in 90 minute intervals and may include up to 10 participants. The workgroup intends to hold two focus groups (one at lunch time and one in the evening) in each region (Western Maryland, Metro DC, Metro Baltimore, Southern Maryland, Eastern Shore) for a total of approximately 100 participants. Participants will be compensated, in the amount of \$75.00, for their participation. Due to funding limitations, the focus groups will not begin until State FY 2024.

The workgroup also planned an honorary event during the October 2023 Council meeting for survivors that have participated in the Council and efforts with the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. Six survivors will be presented with a Governor's citation for their contributions to the domestic violence community and their impact on survivors and services.

FY 2024 Areas of Study

In July 2023, and after a vote, members of the Council decided to continue its work on the current four workgroups: the Abuse Intervention Program Certification Workgroup, the Access to Benefits for Immigrant Survivors Workgroup, the Stalking Prevention Workgroup, and the Survivor Advisory Council Workgroup. Members also decided to reinstate the Abusers Not Meeting Conditions of Court Orders Workgroup.

Abusers Not Meeting Conditions of Court Orders

The workgroup was originally created to address the issue of when abusers who fail to meet the conditions of their probation have their probation expire while enrolled in an abuse intervention program (AIP) and face almost no consequences when their cases are closed. When the workgroup originally convened from 2014-2015, the workgroup met with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) and requested data fields to be added to the Offender Case Management System (OCMS) which tracks case information on offenders. The AIP related data fields were added in August 2020.

The workgroup then reconvened in 2021 to answer: *What is the outcome of cases when defendants fail to meet conditions of a court order, and what are the repercussions?* Due to the updates made to the OCMS to include additional data fields to track AIP orders and completion, the Council requested violation of probation data related to abuse intervention programs from DPSCS. During the period of August 2020 - October 2021, the workgroup requested the:

- number of offenders with AIP as a condition of probation
- number of offenders who fail to complete AIP within probation period
- number of offenders who were violated for failure to complete AIP within probation period (of those, number of offenders where probation was continued, revoked, or closed, as well as number of offenders with failure to complete AIP or AIP condition removed)

The Workgroup received the AIP data from DPSCS, which only included 18 cases. The workgroup found that the new OCMS data fields for AIP were not being utilized. As a result of this finding, DPSCS began to train agents on the new fields in order to better track AIP data and hold abusers accountable.

The Council plans to request the same data for FY 2023. The workgroup will reconvene once the data is received.

Program Updates

The Council serves as the certifying body for all Abuse Intervention Programs (AIPs) in Maryland. Specifically, the Council certifies AIPs for inclusion in the Administrative Office of the Courts' *Bench Book for Maryland Judges* to refer abusers to appropriate intervention programs.

In April 2023, the Council received seven applications for AIP certification, including five applications for recertification and two applications for new programs. Through a peer review process, the Council reviewed the applications which resulted in the recertification of five AIPs (see [Appendix](#) for a list of the certified AIPs). Two programs did not receive certification.

AIP certification is valid for three years. Once certification has been issued, an audit may be conducted at any time during the three year certification period to ensure programs are compliant with the [AIP Operational Guidelines for Abuse Intervention Programs](#) in Maryland set forth by the Council. Later in 2023, 10 programs will undergo audits.

In addition, and between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023, 1,152 participants successfully completed an abuse intervention program in Maryland.

Legislation

The Council provided letters of support for the following bills which were passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2023:

- [House Bill 3/Senate Bill 185](#) - *Maryland State Police Gun Center – Firearms Surrendered Under Final Protective Orders*: Altering the purpose of the Maryland State Police Gun Center to include the tracking, screening, and vetting of all firearms surrendered under final protective orders in the State; and requiring each law enforcement agency to report to the Center the number and type of firearms surrendered, the jurisdictions where the firearms were surrendered, and certain information regarding the individual who surrendered each firearm under final protective orders.
- [House Bill 4/Senate Bill 129](#) - *Criminal Law - Sexual Crimes - Repeal of Spousal Defense*: Repealing a certain prohibition on prosecuting a person for rape or a certain sexual offense against a victim who was the person's legal spouse at the time of the alleged rape or sexual offense.
- [House Bill 630](#) - *Utility Account Holders - Victims of Abuse - Protections*: Authorizing an account holder who is the victim of abuse to terminate, and requiring a utility to allow for the termination of, the account holder's future liability under a utility contract if the

account holder provides the utility with certain written notice requesting termination of the account holder's future liability under the contract; requiring a utility to allow an account holder who terminates a utility contract under the Act to open a new utility account notwithstanding a certain account balance or arrearage; etc.

Looking Ahead: Goals for 2023 - 2024

To continue these efforts, and with the support of the Moore-Miller Administration, the Council identified several goals to pursue in FY 2024, to include the following:

- Deliver and accept workgroup recommendations on access to benefits for immigrant survivors.
- Deliver and accept workgroup recommendations on stalking.
- Deliver and accept workgroup recommendations on a survivor advisory council.
- Complete certification and review of the AIPs that are due for recertification and/or requesting certification for the first time.
- Conduct audits of AIPs to ensure compliance with the operational guidelines.
- Build capacity of Maryland domestic violence organizations by assisting with information and awareness sharing.
- Advise the Governor, through the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services, on workgroup topics and recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year.

Appendix: Certified Abuse Intervention Programs

The following AIPs are certified in Maryland:

Abused Persons Program, New Beginnings Abuser Intervention Program
Alcohol & Drug Intervention (ADI)
Calvert County Health Department, Calvert Center for Change, Abuser Intervention Program
Catoctin Counseling Center
Center for Abused Persons
Citizens Assisting and Sheltering the Abused (CASA), Inc., Positive Choices Abuser Intervention Program
Dove Center, Abuser Intervention Program
Family Crisis Center of Baltimore County, New Behaviors Group Program
Family Crisis Resource Center, Abuser Intervention Program
HARBEL Community Organization, Inc., Harbel Prevention and Recovery Center
Heartly House, Abuse Intervention Program
House of Ruth Maryland, Gateway Project
Life Crisis Center, Inc.
Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence, Abuser Intervention Program
My Covenant Place, Alpha Project
North Carroll Counseling Center
Relational Excellence, Engaging Men's Program
Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC), Inc., Abuser Intervention Program
Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy
Springboard Community Services, Abuser Intervention Program
Synergy Family Services, Inc.
TurnAround, Abuser Intervention Program
YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County