



DELAWARE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Breaking the cycle of violence.

For Immediate Release
March 29, 2013

Media Contact: Stephanie Ferrell, Director of Communications
302-658-2958 or sferrell@dcadv.org

Domestic violence victims get tools and funds to rebuild their lives

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE – Hundreds of domestic violence victims throughout Delaware now have the opportunity to earn and save money, improve their credit, and become financially savvy and empowered as they rebuild lives for themselves and their families. With funding from The Allstate Foundation, a collaboration of three Delaware nonprofit organizations is addressing the number one reason victims remain trapped with their abusers: financial instability. Victims escaping dangerous relationships and seeking shelter and other domestic violence services from YWCA Delaware in New Castle County and People's Place in Kent and Sussex Counties now not only feel safer, but also more financially secure.

The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence was awarded a one-year \$40,000 grant through The Allstate Foundation Moving Ahead Financial Empowerment Grant Program in October. Funds are being used to implement the "Delaware Women in Charge of their Financial Futures" program in the YWCA's Home Life Management Center in Wilmington and three downstate domestic violence shelters that are part of People's Place's SAFE (Safety, Advocacy, Freedom and Empowerment) and Abriendo Puertas programs.

Both Coalition member organizations are delivering financial education to victims, utilizing the *Moving Ahead through Financial Management* curriculum. This is offered to victims who have identified financial abuse in their relationships through one-to-one sessions and in facilitated groups, along with support in financial planning and credit rebuilding. Both programs will also coordinate a match savings program for victims who complete the financial management training. These funds will be used for necessities like security deposits and furniture for new apartments, automobiles, judgment payoffs to clean up their credit, and more.

The path to economic empowerment often requires time to find affordable housing and childcare options, repair credit damaged by abusive partners, deal with the day-to-day challenges of taking care of a family, and in some cases finding jobs. "Victims who did not help manage the finances in their relationships can be punished for credit and tax obligations that they knew nothing about," said YWCA's Chief Programs Officer Stephanie Staats. "Many of the women in the YWCA's program have for the first time created financial plans to manage their spending within their means. Some have opened bank accounts for the first time, and are already working to improve their credit scores."

The trained advocates work individually and in groups with victims in and out of the four shelters involved in the project. Staff are also training more than a hundred professionals who work with victims in a variety of settings outside of these shelters. The Coalition is assisting with "train the trainer" education, grant administration, and technical assistance to the programs.

"Most people think of domestic violence as physical or emotional, but financial abuse can be just as dangerous. In a very real way, money is power, and, especially in these tough economic times, this program provides victims with the skills and resources they need to work toward financial independence," says Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence Executive Director Carol Post. "We see these as critical components of victim safety."

“Victims of domestic violence frequently need some assistance to become economically secure. It has been really exciting to watch the women gain the financial skills and supports they need to make it on their own. This program has created a ‘culture of savings’ in our shelters and is truly changing the trajectory of these women’s lives,” says Marcey Rezac, Program Director of the SAFE Program of People's Place.

Women who are interested in participating in the workshops or match savings program should contact YWCA Delaware at 302-658-7110 Ext. 204 and People’s Place at 302-422-8058. Upcoming workshops on this topic that are open to the public will be offered at the Coalition’s Annual Advocates’ Retreat on May 6 and 7 and at a future Money School event. More details are available at www.dcadv.org.

###