

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OUTREACH — ARCHDIOCESE of CHICAGO — AWARENESS - SERVICES - PREVENTION



Good News About the Fight to End Domestic Violence

Winter 2022

## Pope Francis Denounces Domestic Violence



Pope Francis has spoken on domestic violence multiple times since the beginning of the pandemic. He has repeatedly called on society to protect vulnerable women, singling out victims in his prayers. In February, 2021, he released a video calling attention to DV and its many manifestations. ([Pope Francis' video](#))

On Easter Monday 2021, when many countries were imposing lockdowns, Francis spoke in support of victims saying, "Many mothers and sisters and grandmothers who are confined to their homes . . . are at risk of enduring violence."

Francis marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25, 2021, by writing, "The various forms of ill-treatment that many women suffer are acts of cowardice and degradation of all humanity. We must not look the other way . . . The number of women who are beaten, abused in their homes, even by their husbands, is very, very high . . . The

problem is that . . . it is taking advantage of the weakness of those who cannot defend themselves. It is humiliating, very humiliating."

In his Christmas message in 2021, he called on people to be supportive and helpful to "women who have suffered domestic violence during these months of lockdown." In his 2022 New Year's address, Francis stated, "Since mothers bestow life . . . let us all make greater efforts to promote mothers and to protect women. How much violence is directed against women! Enough! To hurt a woman is to insult God, who from a woman took on our humanity. He did not do it through an angel; nor did he come directly; he did it through a woman. At the beginning of the New Year, let us place ourselves under the protection of this woman, the Mother of God, who is also our mother."

According to UN Women, the United Nations organization dedicated to empowering women and gender equality, almost one in three women – an estimated 736 million around the world – have been subjected to physical violence from a partner or sexual violence from someone else at least once. Last month, the organization issued a report suggesting that domestic violence had intensified during the pandemic. *New York Times, December 20, 2021*

### Spirituality for Survivors

ACDVO has published a 40-page booklet in English and Spanish to help survivors of domestic violence to recognize and strengthen their faith and spirituality. Chapters address trusting in God, discovering one's own strengths, managing forgiveness, knowing one's rights, reflecting on biblical texts to strengthen one's faith, plus exercises in breathing and meditation. Order a copy by emailing Fr. Chuck Dahm at [cdahm13@gmail.com](mailto:cdahm13@gmail.com). Booklets are free for survivors and \$4.00 for others for handling.

**You Are Not Alone.  
God Is with You.**



### Biden: Act on Teen Dating Violence

Last month President Biden proclaimed February National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. Excerpts follow: Teen dating violence (TDV) takes many forms, including physical or sexual assault, stalking, coercive and controlling behavior, emotional abuse, harassment, and exploitation, occurring in person or online. CDC research shows that more than 8% of U.S. high school students reported experiencing dating violence over a 1-year period. Young survivors can suffer depression, substance abuse, risk of suicide, eating disorders, poor academic outcomes, unintended pregnancy and other struggles. Survivors of teen dating violence are more likely to be revictimized as adults. See [VetoViolence.CDC.gov](https://www.VetoViolence.CDC.gov) for new resources to address and prevent teen dating violence.



# Challenges with Courts and Staffing

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## Low Salaries for DV Advocates

Domestic violence agencies and shelters are experiencing increased difficulty in hiring staff, largely because of low salaries. Most DV-based nonprofit organizations have openings. The average base salary for a DV advocate in Illinois is \$16.15 per hour, according to Indeed.com. Clearly their social workers' salaries are dramatically lower than those in schools, parks and government agencies. COVID-19 has only aggravated the shortage.

The inability of DV agencies to pay a living, professional wage makes their openings less attractive. Unlike services for addiction, usually paid through health insurance and Medicaid, services for victims of domestic and sexual violence are covered by the agencies through fundraising, and they face major challenges in raising the needed financial support.

At the same time, requests for help to the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline at (877) 863-6338 increased from 2019 to 2020 and remained throughout 2021. Moreover, many stigmas to seeking help have dissolved thanks to the #MeToo movement and TV shows like "Maid" on Netflix, which depicts a young victim struggling to find work and leave an abusive relationship. *Daily Herald, December 13, 2021*

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## A Step Forward in DV Courts

In December, 2021, Cook County Judge Raul Vega retired from the bench, where for the last three years of his 20-year judgeship he had presided over the county's domestic violence courts in controversial fashion. Chief County Judge Timothy Evans quietly announced the retirement in December without explanation. Shortly thereafter it became known that some judges on the court's executive committee had referred Judge Vega to the state's committee that investigates judicial misconduct. They alleged Judge Vega had made inappropriate comments to another judge.

In reality, the coalition of domestic violence agencies in Cook County, The Network: Advocating for Victims of Domestic Violence, had asked Judge Evans since mid-2021 to dismiss Judge Vega for his misogynistic comments and unsympathetic, disbelieving posture toward victims. Victims and court observers have noted his yelling at them and being told they should wear skirts to better win a favorable ruling from Vega.

An investigation by the *Chicago Reader* and Injustice Watch uncovered accusations from women victims that Vega mistreated them, found concerns about his temperament raised by attorneys and former staff members, and highlighted examples of Vega making questionable decisions that were reversed by the Illinois Appellate Court. Leslie Landis, administrator at the courthouse for more than a decade (now retired), commented that Vega often yelled at her in public and described his behavior toward her as a "campaign of abuse, threats, embarrassment and humiliation."

The good news is Vega's replacement is Judge Judith Rice, an African American with an excellent judicial record. The bad news is there is no accountability for Vega's questionable behavior. Once retired he is not subject to investigation but will enjoy a life-long pension of \$14,000 a month. *Chicago Reader, January 27, 2022, [Judge Raul Vega is Retiring](#)*

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## ACDVO Executive Committee

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# Creative Parish Responses



## Holy Cross, Deerfield

Deacon Peery Duderstadt from ACDVO preached on domestic violence at all weekend Masses at Holy Cross Parish in Deerfield, Illinois, in 2019. Responding to his invitation, some parishioners launched the Domestic Abuse Awareness Ministry (DAAM). DAAM included highly motivated and qualified volunteers who have continued as the nucleus of an expanding ministry.

DAAM has published a series of awareness articles in the parish bulletin and also formed partnerships with A Safe Place, a Lake County provider of services for victims of DV and human trafficking, and the Deerfield Police Department Social Services Division. In addition, DAAM organized a symposium on domestic abuse, featuring experts on a range of pertinent topics. Even during the COVID closures, DAAM has revved up its activity as follows:

1. Increased its Zoom meetings to nearly bi-weekly.
2. Designed its own Holy Cross DAAM website <https://domesticabuseholycross.org>.
3. Ministry member Alicen McGowan, LCRC, PhD, a licensed clinician in parent/child therapy, published *We Hid Under the Table* - a chilling look at DV's toll on children.
4. Formed a partnership with DV ministries at nearby parishes, St. Patrick (Lake Forest) and Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Glenview), with enthusiastic support from all pastors.
5. In October 2021, broadcast a Zoom webinar, "How Can I Assist a Domestic Violence Survivor?" (<https://tinyurl.com/56drbe48>), led by Michael Graham, MD, Co-Chair, DAAM.
6. All parish bulletins include, "For help with DV contact A Safe Place 847-249-4450; for suicide help 800-Suicide (784-2433)."
7. Future plans include promoting prevention, developing social media responses and preparing a webinar on healthy relationships for youth.



*Holy Cross, Deerfield, DAAM Zoom meeting*

## Queen of All Saints, Chicago



*John Ceisel, QAS; Jaikie Ceisel, QAS; Adele Bach, QAS; Shelley Welch, WINGS; Ann Kalaska, SMOW; Eileen Griffin, SMOW; Mary Tinich, QAS*

In September, 2021, Queen of All Saints parish held its first Ministry Fair to help parishioners connect with one another and parish activities. The Fair featured an outdoor Mass, a barbecue on the parish lawn and an inflatable bounce house for kids. Queen's Social Justice Ministry, which includes their DV Ministry, was present with information and raised awareness about DV, connecting with more parishioners.

The DV Ministry is part of a larger DV network, "Friends Against Domestic Abuse," which includes St. Mary of the Woods and St. Martha parishes. The network organized an October event featuring a talk by Shelley Welch from WINGS, a large DV service provider on Chicago's northwest side. The event was promoted with a QR code which parishioners could scan and link to Amazon SMILE, allowing them to select items to be sent to WINGS shelters. People unable to attend were able to access Shelley's entire slide presentation about DV and the effective work of WINGS.

## St. James, Arlington Heights

In October, 2021, the St. James parish DV ministry, Stepping Stones, displayed information and resources in the church gathering space together with several Silent Witnesses. Most importantly, the parish community was provided an opportunity to remember and pray for those who had experienced child abuse, or dating, domestic or sexual violence. Parishioners were invited to honor a victim by inscribing his or her first name on a color-coded paper t-shirt and hanging it on a clothesline. The resulting display was quite powerful. By the end of the weekend, 20 people were named as victims of child abuse, 34 victims of DV, 11 victims of sexual assault, and 8 victims of dating violence. All were lifted up in fervent prayer. Women, men, and children visited the display, which will be exhibited again in February at the next community event.





# What's New with ACDVO

## A Police Officer's Journey



I began my law enforcement career in 1958 after working briefly in banking. I felt led by the Holy Spirit to serve the community more directly. Not until the early 1970's did the Spirit reveal the details of my call. I was working in the St. Charles, IL, police department and responded to domestic violence incidents. I was deeply touched by the terrible abuse I saw victims suffer. I wanted to pray with couples, but soon realized that was inappropriate. The typical approach of police then, before the IL Domestic Violence Act in 1986, was to tell abusers to take a walk and cool off. I had a lot to learn.

I ended my career in 2000 in the Kane County State's Attorney's DV prosecution unit. I instructed police officers on proper methods of investigating DV crimes. I volunteered with the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Family Violence Coordinating Council, served on its Training Committee and then chaired the Faith Committee for 13 years. We educated faith communities on DV.

After reading "When I Call for Help," the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter on DV, several parishioners and I formed the "Ministry to Victims of Domestic Abuse" in our parish, St. John Neumann. We developed pamphlets and other information to educate parishioners, had displays during Domestic Violence Awareness Month and held a full day workshop once a year on different topics. As of today, we have assisted 117 women and 3 men.

Noticing the lack of knowledge about DV among clergy, I developed a program entitled Protect Your Flock. With a team, we offered the program in deaneries of the Rockford Diocese. In 2019, we presented at the annual deacons' meeting, receiving many compliments. We had planned a non-denominational version for a local ministerial association when interrupted by Covid-19. I pray that the Spirit continues to give me strength to carry on this vital ministry. Jim Kintz, [kintzjames@aol.com](mailto:kintzjames@aol.com)

## Advances in Prevention

In the 2020–2021 school year, ACDVO implemented the CDC's Dating Matters curriculum with great success in our first school in Chicago. Students and staff loved the program. We have added three schools to our pilot for this school year and plan to add six more schools in the 2022-2023 academic year. If you know of a school interested in utilizing this healthy relationship curriculum, contact Fr. Chuck at [cdahm13@gmail.com](mailto:cdahm13@gmail.com).

## Contact Your Legislators Now

Illinois DV agencies are asking state legislators to increase the 2023 state budget for domestic violence services by \$50 million, yet Governor Pritzker allotted only a small increase in his budget; not acceptable! Take action NOW. Call the governor and the Illinois legislature to remedy this lack of funding and prioritize survivors. Governor Pritzker's Chicago Office number is 312-814-2121. State representatives and senators may all be contacted at 217-782-2000.

In Washington, D.C., senators have struck a bipartisan deal to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which lapsed in 2019. Differences of opinion remain on gun access for unmarried partners convicted of domestic violence or under restraining orders, but President Biden applauded cross-party sponsors for negotiating a strong deal.

Contact your senators to support VAWA.

## Save the Date for ACDVO Gala Benefit - May 1, 2022

ACDVO's 5th Annual Gala Benefit will be celebrated on May 1, 2022, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm at Crystal Sky Banquets, 7941 W. 47th Street, McCook, Illinois (SW corner of 47th St. and Joliet Road, convenient to highway exits). Brunch will be served, along with exciting raffles and presentations of ACDVO activities. The Gala will also celebrate Fr. Chuck's 85th Birthday. Tickets are \$60 and reservations can be made with a check to ACDVO or on [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com); site to follow. Save the date!



## Thank You So Much for Your Generous Support

Thanks to all who donate so generously to support our ministry. We appreciate anything you might share at this time. We still hope to soon be back to full and normal participation in our parishes and communities. Our work is moving forward; help us reduce if not eliminate domestic violence from our midst. May God bless you with good health, love and peace. Contact Charles W. Dahm, O.P. ACDVO Director, [cdahm13@gmail.com](mailto:cdahm13@gmail.com), 312-371-7752, 1914 S. Ashland Avenue, Chicago, IL 60608.