



AWARE 2023 COMMUNITY REPORT

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, AWARE, Inc, like many other organizations serving the community, was stabilizing services delivery to victims. Programs and services continued to be refined to serve victims effectively.

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- The number of victims served surpassed projections.
- The AWARE Board and staff ,with input from the community and our allies, completed the multi-year strategic plan that begins in the new year. This was a deliberative, inclusive process utilizing consultants from the Bayer Center for Non-Profit Management at Robert Morris University, and the skills of Tom Roberts, Rhys and Associates.
- OhanaLink **PURPLE** continued to be utilized by (45) victims. The power of technology to help break the bonds with violence. OhanaLink **PURPLE** continues to roll out across Pennsylvania and now 9 other states. This innovation started in Hermitage, PA.
- Online training via Zoom and through the AWARE Learning Management System increased the number of professionals trained. For local law enforcement, more than (40) officers completed different training modules to improve response to victims of both domestic and sexual violence.
- The multi-year prevention series, ‘Safe Dates’ was completed. Working with Lakeview and Greenville high schools, the series was conducted by AWARE, Inc youth advocates over the last 4 years. Evaluation services were conducted by Dr. Alice Long, HDFS, Penn State, Shenango campus.
- The PA Department of Education initiative ‘It’s On Us’ began in fall 2023. AWARE, Inc is pleased to partner with Thiel College, Grove City College, Laurel Technical Institute and HopeCat on this new venture.

If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic, sexual, emotional or elder violence, call 1-888-981-1457 24/7

JANUARY IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS MONTH



**Mercer County
Human Trafficking
Collaborative**

In 2023, the Mercer County Human Trafficking Collaborative experienced some changes.

- Our thanks to Sara Kaufman who managed the Collaborative Facebook page, single-handedly.
- General meetings were held via Zoom. In August, a meeting was held with the membership to sharpen the focus of the work for the year. The activities will focus on general education about rural human trafficking, with emphasis on child and senior citizen victims, and how an individual or organization can help.
- The Facebook page will be used as a tool for education only.
- An annual newsletter about human trafficking was created and shared with the faith community and interested allies and stakeholders in January 2023.

2023 AWARE, Inc BENCHMARKS

Measure	Goal	Victims Served
Domestic violence victims	500	801
Sexual violence victims	50	281
Child Sexual assault victims	50	83
Child Domestic violence victims	35	78
Emergency Housing	79	88
Permanent Rapid Re-Housing	11	31
Homeless Prevention	4	44
Senior Victims	25	30

NEW! Medical Sector Advocacy

AWARE, Inc is working with Allegheny Health-Grove City, Sharon Regional Medical Center, both campuses of UPMC-Horizon, Primary Health Network (PHN) and the Mercer County Health Equity team on a medical sector response to patients who are experiencing domestic or sexual violence. Updating the SART/DART response through the Emergency Departments, updating procedures conducting forensic exams, utilizing the AWARE Emergency Response Advocates to collaboratively assist the victim, in-service training, distributing patient Information, and conducting community medical outreach and clinics are part of this response.

Thanks to Kim Leonard, CRNP, Regional Director of Magee WHSL of UPMC Northern Pod, Tammy Bimber, DNP, RN, and Babs Schaffer, PCAR Medical advocate, Carrie McAnallen, SRMC Clinical Coordinator, Tracy Schliep, Nick Barron and Jess Combine, PHN, for training, systems support and creative out-of-the-box thinking to help Mercer County.

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VOLUNTEER TIME!

**Thanks to all of our
volunteers and interns!**

During 2023, a total of (2,573) hours of
volunteer time was conducted serving victims

Direct Services: Kaitlyn Ramsey
Mikayla Gordon
Hailey Maddox

Office: Bertha Chambers

**Thanks to our Court Navigator Volunteers
who help adult victims of domestic violence navigate civil court to secure PFA.**

Jami Merrill Jasmine Miracle Cody Dezanet Emma Haywood

Advisory Board members

Williams House Advisory Board

Jennie Kather Sue Lauffer Frank Yokubeak Tracey Romesburg
Salley Fagley Sarah Miller-Barr Diana Miller
Valerie Manganello Mary Ellen Bayuk Katie Cowie

Brandi Montgomery House Advisory Board

Jane Montgomery Crystal Popella Mitch McFeely
Stacy Schell Jaimie Gildersleeve

Shirley Bursey House Advisory Board

Carol Crawford Leah Sizer Patti Parenti
Annie Carpenter Courtney Cilli Paige Green

Are you interested in volunteering?

Contact: Amanda, Volunteer and Training Coordinator

Email: abanic@merceraaware.org

Phone 724-342-4934 x114

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Prevention Project

For the last 5 years, AWARE, Inc in collaboration with Lakeview and Greenville High schools, have been working on a prevention project. Using a multi-session series, 'Safe Dates' AWARE, Inc Youth advocates delivered the series online or in-person (Covid was a significant disruption) to teens.

The series addresses teen topics like internet safety and healthy relationships, along with promoting and supporting the positive concept of teens helping teens and bystander engagement. Students were engaged and asked good questions and feedback. Redundant messaging around key concepts was employed through a Teen Advisory Board and messaging through sports calendars and ad spots. Teen advisory board members created positive social media content directed to other teens around healthy dating and health relationships.

A retrospective survey was developed for the project by Penn State professor, Dr. Alice Long. The tool surveys students and the teachers and solicits feedback on the content or other topics not included in the series. Dr. Long is reconciling the data sets over time, to identify any changes in knowledge, attitude and belief in how rural students respond to the series content.

AWARE, Inc thanks PCAR and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for funding this prevention effort. AWARE, Inc will continue to support school-based prevention programming for Mercer County school districts.

AWARE, Inc has successfully expanded its Housing program with a focus on homeless prevention. With support from the Mercer County Board of Commissioners, a grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has been secured to help families in Mercer County at risk of homelessness.

Homeless Prevention

Marsha Fields, Housing Case Manager, works with at-risk families, private landlords, and Mercer County Housing Coalition partners to help people to remain in their homes. Through the grant, it was expected (4) families would be served.

During 2023, **(44) families** were served with rental and utility assistance, case management, care coordination and referrals to other supports.

Rapid Re-Housing Services

AWARE, Inc continues to experience success helping victims of domestic and sexual violence through a longer term, permanent housing program. In partnership with PCADV and the western Pennsylvania Continuum of Care, along with DCED, AWARE, Inc is part of a regional, multi-county, rapid rehousing initiative to help victims.

Given the profound increase in domestic violence homicide and serious injury during the pandemic, offering a range of housing options for domestic violence victims continues to be essential now.

The program model works with the victim and landlord (private and public) throughout the county. Monthly rent and utilities expenses are shared until the victim assumes full responsibility. Individual case management and care coordination along with fiscal literacy education are offered. The housing case manager also works with landlords to assure both the tenant and the landlord are clear about expectations and timelines.

Building on the agency's strength in providing housing services, (11) additional families was projected to be served. In 2023, **(31)** families were helped.

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MERCER LEGAL ADVOCACY

The Legal Advocacy program located in Mercer, has had a busy year, post-pandemic. Staff and volunteers serve victims of all ages who experience domestic, emotional or sexual violence.

- Deputies from the Mercer Sheriff Office and local law enforcement worked to serve all protection orders, to assure that law enforcement and victims remain safe. **Going above to serve our community!**
- Through the AWARE, Inc learning management system (LMS) more than (40) officers completed up to 7 different training modules addressing different aspects of improving response to victims of domestic and sexual violence.
- **(252)** adult domestic violence victims navigated the courts for PFA relief.
- **(6)** sexual assault victims secured Sexual Violence Protection Order.
- **(89)** criminal cases of domestic violence; **(32)** criminal cases adult sexual assault investigated by the STOP grant-funded Criminal Investigator in the DA's office.

Through the Mercer County STOP project, our thanks to Judge Tedd Nesbit, chair of the CJAB/STOP team, DA Pete Acker, the Mercer Chief's Association, and the Sheriff's office who have worked with AWARE, Inc over the years building a cross-systems, collaborative response to help victims through the Mercer STOP project

HOTLINE

The Hotline program is often the first point of contact for people needing help, assistance, and information. Staff and volunteers respond to victims and community members via online chat through www.merceraware.org and direct messaging from social media like Facebook and Instagram pages. Online response proved integral during the pandemic.

The hotline program is a focus of the AWARE Volunteer program. Interested in helping?
For information, contact Amanda at abanic@merceraware.org.



merceraware



@merceraware



Mercercountyawareinc



Awareinc



Mercer AWARE Inc

MAIN OFFICE

109 S. Sharpsville Ave, Suite D
Sharon, PA 16146

Admin Phone: 724-342-4934 ☐



Hotline: 888-981-1457

24/7

2023 BOARD

Jennie Kather President
Carol Crawford Vice President
Kassandra Shawgo Treasurer
Crystal Popella Secretary
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Amy Burns Candi Landfried-Shearer
Leah Sizer Anna Myers
Katy Cowie-Igersheim Dave Leyde

2023 STAFF

Lizette Olsen, Executive Director
Peg Chapman, Fiscal Coordinator
Druann Swift, Grants Manager
Amanda Banic, Volunteer and Training Coordinator
Mark Rupert, Property Manager
Julia Shipton, Program Support Specialist
Michaelene Egelsky, Program Support Specialist

Program Services

Nicole Cadman, Director, Program Services
Sarah Pisegna (current), Legal Advocacy Coordinator
Rebecca Bruno (former) Legal Advocacy Coordinator
Brytany DiClaudio, Mobile Legal Advocate
Levi Fleege, Legal/Counselor Advocate
Julie Lorow, Legal/Counselor Advocate
Cassandra Smith, Hotline Advocate
Chelsey Hammond, Adult Counselor Advocate
Ratasha Sims, Youth Advocate
Corrin Stonebraker, Youth Advocate
Shannon Richardson, Medical Advocate
Killian Kettering ERA/Legal Advocate
Holly Friedman, ERA
Amanda Boozer, ERA
Katarina Rodriques, ERA
Jade Wagner, ERA

Housing Program

Maegan Matthews, Emergency Housing Coordinator
Sarah Pisegna, Counselor Advocate/ERA
Marise Wright, Counselor Advocate/ERA
Alexandra Knight, Counselor Advocate/ERA
Marissa Monnin, Counselor Advocate
Marsha Fields, Housing Case Manager