



Domestic Abuse Program Annual Report 2024



"For a long time, I was hopeless. I had given up. The help, support and assistance of kindhearted people and [programs like my local domestic abuse agency] restored my faith in humanity. It has and continues to make a difference. Especially at times when I didn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. With my deepest gratitude."

– Wisconsin Survivor 2024

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Wisconsin Department of Children and Families Domestic Abuse Program

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) Domestic Abuse Program administers state and federal funding dedicated to providing shelter and supportive services for survivors of domestic violence and their families. This funding is critical to the ability of domestic abuse agencies across the state to provide safety to victims and their children when they need it most.

What is Domestic Abuse and Why is it a Public Health Concern?

Domestic abuse/domestic violence (DV) is a pattern of coercive, controlling behavior, by current and former spouses and dating partners, that can include physical, emotional or psychological, sexual, or financial abuse ([National Network to End Domestic Violence](#)). Wisconsin ranks 7th in the nation for domestic violence homicides (National Network to End Domestic Violence).

Due to the high rates of domestic abuse in our society, DV is a significant public health concern that profoundly impacts the overall health of individuals and families.¹ In 2023, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin's annual Homicide Report showed 85 DV-related homicides.

Nationwide, a 2021 study ranks Wisconsin 7th for the number of DV related homicides, which means that in 2021, one in every six domestic violence homicides in the nation happened in Wisconsin.² Further, The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children, a world-leading birth cohort study, demonstrated that nearly two-thirds of households reporting parental domestic abuse were estimated to have co-occurring child maltreatment.³

In addition to being a severe public health issue, DV in Wisconsin is a serious economic problem that requires intervention. According to a new study by the Sojourner Family Peace Center, the state's largest provider of domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, the estimated annual number of DV victims in Wisconsin is 94,299, with \$657.8 million in annual economic losses statewide.⁴



1. Center for Disease Control, October 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/index.html>
2. End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, October 2024, <https://edaw-webinars.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/08013817/2023-Wisconsin-Domestic-Violence-Homicide-Report.pdf>
3. National Institutes of Health, December 2023, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10709161/>
4. Luthern A. The cost of domestic violence in Wisconsin? A new study estimates annual economic losses at \$657 million – and growing. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. October 2022.



In CY2024

40

Shelter Programs



81

Non-profit Domestic Abuse
and Sexual Assault Agencies

10

Tribal DV Programs

3

Technical Assistance
and Training Providers

Thank you for accepting me into your shelter. I felt very safe here. It was also comforting knowing staff were knowledgeable with so many resources available to our needs. Again, thank you for the amazing work and making my situation so important."

– Shelter Client, Women's Center,
Waukesha

Addressing Domestic Abuse in Wisconsin

The goals of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) Domestic Abuse Program are to:

- Provide accessible, trauma-sensitive, culturally responsive crisis, safety, and support services for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and their children;
- Provide accessible, effective, and culturally appropriate services to survivors of domestic abuse from traditionally underserved groups and from across the life span;
- Educate the community about issues related to domestic abuse;
- Promote a coordinated community response to domestic abuse; and
- Promote the social change necessary to end domestic abuse.

Wisconsin DCF Domestic Abuse Funding

In CY2024, DCF administered \$16 million to local DV programs to provide core support services for survivors of domestic abuse, as well as services to children and underrepresented groups. Over \$2 million was also administered for prevention, training, and technical assistance to domestic abuse programs. This funding included state and federal funding sources.

DCF Domestic Abuse Contracts fund 81 nonprofit domestic violence (DV), sexual assault (SA), and dual DV/SA agencies; ten federally recognized tribes; and three technical assistance and training providers.



Services Funded by DCF in FFY 2024

Between Oct 1, 2023, and Sept 30, 2024, DCF domestic abuse funding provided 268,670 nights of safe shelter for 4,790 survivors and their children. **This was 14,724 more nights than in FFY 2023.** Of the 4,790 people staying in safe shelter, 46.5% or 2,228 of those were children and youth. DCF domestic abuse funding also provided 30,568 survivors with supportive advocacy, counseling, and other community-based services.

24-Hour Crisis Line: Programs provide or contract for immediate, live access to trained staff or volunteers on a crisis hotline so that survivors have access to assistance any day, any time.

Information, Referral and Follow-up Services: Programs have linkages and provide information and referral to community resources for those services which are needed and requested by survivors but not provided directly by the program.

Advocacy and Counseling: Programs provide survivor-driven information, support, assistance, accompaniment, and intervention. These services may include individual support and safety planning, support groups, legal advocacy, and/or individual therapy.

In this fiscal year:

- 3,522 children received individual or group counseling
- 15,763 adult survivors received individual or group counseling support
- 16,046 adult survivors received legal advocacy (*Legal advocacy can include but is not limited to preparing paperwork for protection/restraining orders, accompanying a client to a protection order hearing, and all other advocacy within the civil justice system.*)

“A child said to his mother after his first group, ‘I’m not the only one. Other kids’ parents fight, and they left home too.’ A young man who came to an appointment with his Mom stated, ‘Thank you for saving my Mother’s life. She told me all you did for her that no one else would have.’

– DV Client, Advocates of Ozaukee, Saukville

Nights of Safe Shelter

10/01/2023 – 09/30/2024



268,670

Crisis Line Calls

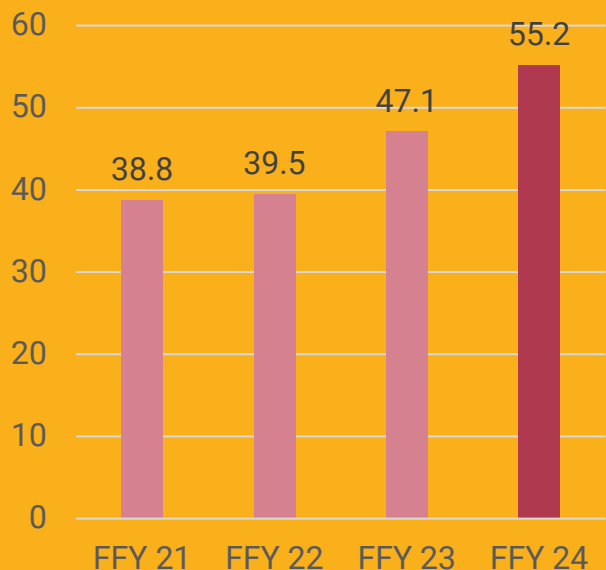
10/01/2023 – 09/30/2024



99,990

Providing Safe Shelter for Wisconsin Survivors FFY24 10/01/2023 - 09/30/2024

Average Length of Shelter Stay (in days)



14,724
more nights of
shelter provided



13,959
Shelters turned
away survivors

Services Funded by DCF in FFY 2024 (cont.)

Shelter: Wisconsin Domestic Violence Programs report that the housing crisis in many communities has impacted survivors' ability to find safe housing. From FFY23 to FFY24, the number of nights of shelter provided annually increased from 253,946 to 268,670. In the same span of time, the average length of shelter stay for a family in crisis increased from nights 47.1 to 55.2 nights.

Shelter can be provided in numerous ways. Domestic abuse programs work with survivors to provide the best option available depending on survivor needs and the availability of space and funding. DCF currently funds 40 domestic abuse shelters which provide residential and support services for survivors and their children fleeing violent homes. When shelters are full or the needs of a client warrant it, DV Programs may provide hotel rooms or emergency funding to help a survivor remain safely housed.

Sometimes however, there are not enough resources to safely shelter/house all survivors who need safety. In FFY 2024 alone, 54.6% of DV shelters had to turn away survivors due to lack of capacity to serve them and more than 13,900 survivor requests for shelter went unfulfilled.

In addition, the average length of stay in shelter increased almost 8 days in length from the prior year; a trend that DV advocates attribute to the shortage of affordable housing throughout Wisconsin.

Community Education: Programs educate individuals and organizations about issues surrounding domestic abuse. Many programs provide education to youth of all ages through programming in schools. Community education may include information about available services, information about abuse, prevention of domestic abuse, and the need for social change.

This program quite literally saved our lives in more ways than I could count. Thank you all so very much."

– Shelter Client



The largest funding categories were:



Rent/
security deposit



Personal
transportation
and vehicle
maintenance



Utilities

Domestic Violence Housing First Pilot Project

The Domestic Violence Housing First Pilot Project (DVHF) is an evidence based and trauma informed practice that moves domestic violence survivors into safe, stable, and permanent housing as quickly as possible, reducing or avoiding the need for emergency shelter. Once housed, survivors have access to supportive, holistic advocacy resources to rebuild their lives.

This pilot project started in December 2021 with DCF issuing awards to nine domestic violence agencies from around the state: Embrace (Ladysmith), Cia Siab (La Crosse), The Family Center (Wisconsin Rapids), Safe Harbor (Sheboygan), Harbor House (Appleton), Domestic Abuse Intervention Services (Madison), The Women's Community (Wausau), Center Against Sexual and Domestic Abuse (Superior), and the Milwaukee Center for Children and Youth (Milwaukee).

"My kids and I would be on the street or back in a situation that would expose us to more domestic violence if we didn't have housing first help."

– DVHF Participant



Domestic Violence Housing First Pilot Project (cont.)

“Safe and secure housing is one of the most critical needs for DV survivors. Indeed, DV survivors self-identify stable housing and the resources to maintain stable housing as one of their most pressing needs.”¹ At the same time, severely limited funding combined with serious housing shortages have made it extraordinarily challenging for DV programs throughout the state to provide adequate housing services and assistance to their clients.

The WI-DVHF pilot program is designed to address these housing challenges and allows providers to trial and implement innovative and unique solutions that are consistent with the DVHF philosophy. The aim of flexible financial assistance is to reduce any type of barrier faced by a domestic violence survivor in acquiring safe and stable housing. This project will be administered through December 31, 2026.

Research to Assess the Effectiveness of the DVHF approach

In implementing DVHF in Wisconsin, DCF hired the University of Wisconsin-Madison in December 2021 to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot sites’ implementation of DVHF on the lives of DV survivors, including DV survivors from previously understudied communities.

As of December 2023, 64 participants completed the baseline assessment in full (including 8 Hmong participants who completed the survey via verbal interview).

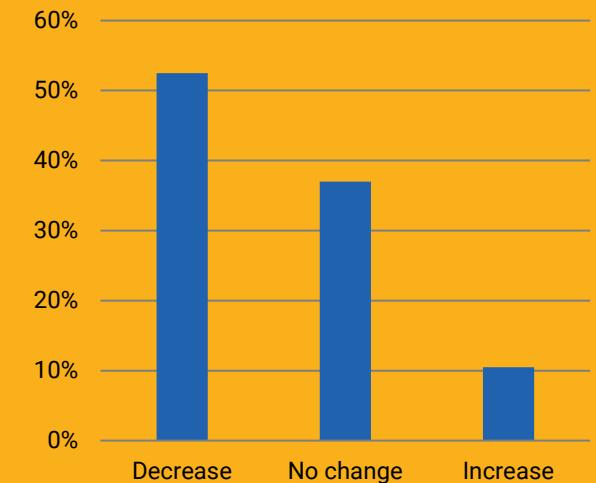
Preliminary findings include:

- **More than 50% of survivors surveyed reported a decrease in exposure to violence.**
- The average amount of money distributed to survivors was \$995 and the median amount was \$724.
- Most of the respondents are women with children; more than 40% of women report having a disability.
- The largest funding categories were: 1) rent and security deposit, 2) personal transportation and vehicle maintenance, and 3) utilities.

1. Stylianou AM, Pich C. Beyond Domestic Violence Shelter: factors associated with housing placements for survivors exiting emergency shelters. J Interpers Violence. 2021;36(17-18):n94 40-n9462. doi: 10.1177/0886260519858393

Results of Implementing DV Housing First September 2022 – August 2023

Exposure to Domestic Abuse
after DVHF Assistance



“The scope of meaningful financial support we’re able to offer with DVHF is transformative. It’s profoundly different.”
– DV Program Advocate



I really enjoyed the women's only group as I was uplifted by others, and it felt comfortable to be in a room with only females as males don't understand where a woman is coming from when they were sexually or physically abused.

Being able to actually socialize and come out of my comfort zone to be myself without judgement.



Preventing Domestic Violence: The Critical Work of Ending the Cycle of Violence

Statewide Prevention Initiative

DCF Domestic Abuse Program Funding supports the *Statewide Domestic Violence Prevention Initiative*. This initiative, which is managed through a subcontract to End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, is a comprehensive approach to teaching Wisconsin's youth how to build healthy relationships. Its key components include subgrants to local agencies for primary prevention activities; a media/social marketing campaign, strategies for youth involvement and leadership; and the annual Teen Summit on Healthy Relationships.

All components are interconnected and reach diverse parts of the state to educate youth on the importance of building healthy relationships throughout their lifetime. This critical work shapes the lives of young people, and they can carry this experience forward to create a kinder, gentler world.

Annual Teen Summit on Healthy Relationships

The 2024 Teen Summit was held in person April 28-30, 2024, with over 300 people attending. The Summit is the largest and most diverse event of Wisconsin's domestic abuse movement, bringing youth, parents, educators, activists, and mentors from all over Wisconsin to learn about healthy relationships, teen dating violence, and sexual assault. The Teen Summit includes educational and enthusiastic plenary speakers, as well as topic-related workshops and performances and plenty of opportunities for teens to network with peers from around the state on a deeper level.

