

ABOUT THE ROCHESTER MONROE COUNTY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONSORTIUM

The Rochester Monroe County Domestic Violence Consortium (DVC) serves agencies and populations impacted by domestic violence. Its mission is to lead an inclusive, collaborative community response to domestic violence that promotes safety for victims/survivors and their families, ensure offender accountability and foster community awareness.

The Consortium achieves its goals through a process by which multiple member agencies convene regularly. The commitment to the work is driven by the recognition that, when attempting to influence and change community systems, many voices speaking and acting together are stronger than one.

The Rochester/Monroe County Domestic Violence Consortium (DVC) was founded in 1982 as an advisory group to the Men’s Education for Non-Violence Program, the first Batterer Intervention Program to operate in the Greater Rochester Area.

The initial responsibilities of the Consortium assisted the Men’s Workshop, ensuring their policies or practices would not jeopardize the safety of battered women and children. In the 1980’s, domestic violence was considered a hidden crime. As new concepts and directives were created, the Domestic Violence Consortium became a singular place in which agencies shared a common language. Today the DVC is a unique organization solely run by volunteers with the assistance of a part-time coordinator, funded by a federal grant.

This is a pivotal moment for the DVC. The pandemic that began in 2020 changed people’s personal and professional lives forever, including the DVC. Social distancing and lockdown led to decreased member engagement and significantly altered the structure and nature of the organization. Meetings, which had previously been held in person, dwindled and were almost exclusively held on Zoom. Many people adopted a hybrid model of work, affecting people’s availability and their desire to protect their off-work time. Simultaneously, member agencies experienced significant demands for services.

In today’s transformed environment, the DVC leadership welcomes the opportunity to re-engage members and invite new representatives to the table. It’s a critical time to redefine and energize the work of the DVC to strengthen its influence in the community and support members’ efforts. More than three years after the start of the pandemic, the need for the Domestic Violence Consortium is greater than ever.

It’s critical that the relationship between the DVC and its members, primarily direct-service organizations, remains strong and effective. Moving forward, the DVC seeks to understand and define *how it can add value to these organizations*, optimizing the power of a united Consortium to address domestic violence in the community.

COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE

No single organization cannot address systemic issues such as domestic violence. A multi-faceted response must be in place. A Coordinated Community Response (CCR) is widely considered a best practice in responding to stalking, domestic violence, and sexual violence. This is a localized initiative that brings together key players – from the criminal justice system, the civil justice system, survivor support services, and the broader community – working together to support survivors and hold those who cause harm accountable. By sharing information, policies, protocols, strategies, and training, CCR teams enable effective, holistic and coordinated agency responses.

Since its inception, the DVC has been part of a larger Coordinated Community Response working for survivor safety and offender accountability. At its core, a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic

Violence places the responsibility of preventing or stopping domestic violence on the community as a whole. The DVC is well positioned in the community to fulfill this role. The CCR encompasses a whole system with the broadest possible response to domestic violence addressing prevention, early intervention, dealing with crisis, risk fluctuation, long-term recovery and safety, working with a wide range of services, pathways, agencies, and systems.

There is growing consensus among all CCRs and among DVC members that organizations need to refocus on the voice of survivors. This strategic plan prioritizes that focus and will continue to do so.

DVC LEADERSHIP, STAFFING, STAKEHOLDERS

The Domestic Violence Consortium is an all-volunteer organization, led by an Executive Committee with the assistance of a part-time Coordinator. The strategic plan is written with the expectation that volunteers will actively engage in the functioning of committees and initiatives that enable the DVC to thrive.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The DVC's focus is survivor safety and offender accountability. The survivor's voice is paramount. If we are to strengthen and build a new Consortium, it is imperative that we all commit to a strategy that is realistic in its ability to deliver targeted activities designed to make the greatest impact.

The focus of this strategic plan is to engage stakeholders, support community engagement and strengthen system accountability. Given the passion and commitment of former and present members, the DVC believes this is an achievable and worthy goal.

STAKE HOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement is critical to every organization's success. Creation of a compelling strategy to attract new members and retain existing members is crucial. Stakeholder engagement efforts over the next three years include:

- Keeping survivor safety as the primary goal
- Sustaining a community of diverse stakeholders (agencies, individuals, businesses and systems impacted by domestic violence) and giving them a forum for networking, information sharing and building mutually beneficial relationships
- Expanding and diversifying stakeholder involvement by recruiting health care providers, schools and clergy
- Utilizing consistent messaging by all DVC members to highlight the impact of domestic violence on the community. Reinforcing the responsibility of the community to heighten its own efforts to protect survivors.
- The DVC is uniquely positioned to offer a forum for its members to collaborate, problem-solve and offer mutual support and encouragement individually and collectively. This is one of the most important and valuable benefits of the DVC membership.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement identifies and develops community priorities affecting change at the systemic level, and implements a culture of shared advocacy. Community engagement efforts over the next three years include:

- Using real time data and research, identify issues impacting perception, delivery and efficacy of domestic violence services in our community
- Based on both survivor and agency input, develop policy recommendations to influence change at state and local levels
- Identify local concerns/trends to provide real time, qualitative information collection
- Educate stakeholders, the public, and the media on current and emerging issues through outreach, engagement, and community events.

SYSTEM ACCOUNTABILITY

System accountability always has been and will be an important role for the DVC. It is uniquely positioned to allow stakeholders and members alike to present a collective voice—one that incorporates the lived experience of victims and survivors to identify gaps in services and systems. In this way the DVC can intervene across systems to make the community safer for survivors while also increasing efforts to hold offenders accountable. System accountability efforts over the next three years include:

- Tracking issues at the community level, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data to inform areas in which advocacy and action are most needed
- Monitoring and advocating for systemic change to address barriers
- Evaluating system policies and procedures to ensure survivors are protected and offenders are held accountable
- Elevating, through advocacy and communications tools, the need for the system to hold offenders accountable (without escalating risk to the survivor). The system has failed survivors by not allocating enough funding and resources for effective offender accountability approaches.
- Engaging in more robust involvement with judges, decision makers, Prosecutors, District Attorneys, Law Enforcement, Corrections, Probation, Parole, Court Services, and Pre-Trial Monitoring Services
- Developing and instituting a process for Fatality/Case Review, the forensic process to improve breakdowns in the system. The creation of a written process for this is important to assure consistency, thoroughness, confidentiality, and objectivity

TACTICS to SUPPORT THE STRATEGY:

- Clarify a unified, relevant and realistic mission and vision
- Coalition building through recruitment of diverse members—diverse on many levels—race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, lived experience, age, and experience
- Recruitment of stakeholders whose organizational mission is not necessarily centered on domestic violence, but whose work is impacted by domestic violence
- Return to In-Person meetings
- Structure meetings with the goal to be organized, accountable and meaningful
- Plan/schedule quarterly meetings at the beginning of each year
- Consider holding committee meetings following the quarterly member meetings
- Increasing diversity in membership is important overall

AMPLIFY THE MESSAGE

- At several points during the planning process the Legislative Breakfast was identified as an event that added value in the community and was worth the effort of organizing and delivering. Consider a standing committee or workgroup whose sole focus is planning and delivering the Legislative Breakfast
- Public relations efforts need to be stepped up. Although the DVC has been in existence for a long time, it is relatively unknown to the broader community. The organization must create an intentional communication and public relations plan and take advantage of opportunities to raise awareness. Recruitment of marketing, communication, and public relations staff from member organizations can support this effort. Moreover, professionals offering their services have an opportunity to give back to the community and have a chance to network with like-minded peers
- Create highly visual materials to tell the stories of domestic violence, including infographics. One such infographic might tell the story of the phases of recovery and healing from DV. This piece might be used by other agencies, stakeholders, clergy, health care providers, schools and more as an informational tool
- Through messaging and public relations efforts, continuously elevate the message that domestic violence is a public health issue of epidemic proportions.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

It is critical that the governance structure be modified to support these priorities and also be poised to implement a three-year operational plan to move these priorities from *ideas* to *actions*. Keep in mind that the Domestic Violence Consortium answers to the overreaching ICJR grant and must conform and comply with those deliverables.

- Re-align governance structure to support new priorities, this includes a committee structure which will support the work of the organization, governing documents, and a revised mission and vision
- Committee structure for consideration:
 - Executive Committee ○ Public Relations & Communication Committee ○ Advocacy & Education Committee ○ System Accountability Committee ○ Legislative Breakfast Planning Committee or workgroup ○ Survivor Advisory Committee
 - This committee would be created to allow for the “voice of the survivor” (the voice of the survivor is lacking at the DVC right now). Consistent and continuous input from diverse survivors is essential
- Update current Committee Charters to define the purpose, composition, rules and procedures for individual committees. These might include meeting times, frequency, eligibility, recruitment and attendance requirements
- Executive committee would develop committee level annual work plans which would be approved by the Board of Directors, to assure work of all committees is aligned with the goals of the strategic plan
- Member Position Descriptions
 - Member position descriptions are similar to a “job” description for members volunteering with the DVC. The Member Position Description would include the vision and mission statements of the DVC, the meeting frequency, attendance expectations, expectations for service on a committee or workgroup with a list of the active committees/workgroups, length of expected term of service, expectations for participation in any events, if any. Being clear on the expectations of members ensures a mutually beneficial and successful partnership.
 - It is also useful for the DVC to reach out to members should their engagement wane
- Bylaw Revision ○ The current bylaws of the DVC are outdated and no longer are aligned with the structure, activities or needs of the organization. An in-depth review and rewrite of the bylaws is important to the organization as it redesigns its’ governance structure to meet the needs of the organization. Once rewritten, the organization needs to assure that it is working in alignment with the new bylaws.

EFFECTIVENESS WITH MINIMAL STAFF & VOLUNTEER CORP

- Creation of annual plans for the organization and committee plans for each committee and/or workgroup. In a primarily volunteer organization, this discipline keeps people focused, productive and on task. *It is important to include timelines for the deliverables in the plans.*
- Capturing all aspects of the work in the annual workplan is important, including activities like the survivor survey and providing data to others as part of their reporting needs.
- Define data collection needs and reporting requirements so these tasks can be more proactive than reactive. This also allows for development of tools to better manage and make this more efficient as it is understood over time.

BARRIERS to SUCCESS

- DVC members time constraints (almost all work full time in addition to volunteering)
- DVC Coordinator grant funded hours vs. workload discrepancy
- Funds needed for program initiatives
- Consolidation/closing of area service providers/turnover create challenges for continuity
- Decrease in membership
- Shift in attitudes toward volunteering
- Vicarious trauma and burnout among individual members
- Grant funding is always uncertain—lack of financial sustainability creates stress
- Part time Coordinator position is solely dependent on grant funding ○ Responsibilities outweigh hours

IN CLOSING

The DVC is a primarily volunteer organization. As such, the energy and focus required to attract volunteers, maintain focus and sustain momentum is *immense*.

Continuous reminders of the ways in which the work of the DVC is impacting the lives of survivors is important to keep people motivated and committed to the work of the DVC. When volunteers feel that the commitment of their time is worthwhile it will have significant impact on attracting and retaining the membership needed to do the important work of the DVC. Igniting passion for this work around the DVC table can translate into a tremendous impact on the lives of survivors in our community.

DVC STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE

YEAR ONE (2024)

- Re-brand/launch “new” DVC
- Create & vote on new logo
- Preliminary media campaign development
- Social media outreach
- Clarify Member Roles and Leadership Responsibilities
- Revise by Laws, Mission and Vision
- Select Committees open for membership
- Recruit for Committee Chairs and Members
- Revise/update Committee structures, charters and workplans
- Create and implement General Membership recruitment plan
- Create annual In-Person Meeting Schedule
- Create standard agenda with topics aligned with strategic priorities
- Periodic e-newsletters
- Plan 2025 Legislative Breakfast
- Initiate talks/planning of **Community-Wide training*** to be presented in Year 3 (ICJR grant deliverable)
- Coordinator facilitate **High Risk Assessment protocol** (ICJR grant deliverable)
- Annual Survivor Survey
- Coordinator reports

YEAR TWO (2025)

- Review regional policies affecting domestic violence services
- Continue developing **Victim Resource Directory** (begun in 2021)*
- Utilize resources from Domestic Violence Awareness Project for engaging media
- Create Community Pledge for Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October
- Develop Media Campaign
- Hold 2025 Legislative Breakfast
- Plan for 2026 Legislative Breakfast
- Continue planning training **Community-Wide training** to be presented in Year 3
- Regular periodic e-newsletters
- Implement survey assessing member engagement/satisfaction with DVC
- DVC, with project partners, develop training & policies/best practices for partners in law enforcement, judiciary, and advocates (ICJR grant deliverable)
- Continue implementation of **High-Risk case reviews** with DVC member agencies (ICJR grant deliverable)
- Annual Survivor Survey
- Coordinator reports

DVC STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE, continued

YEAR THREE (2026)

- Continue developing/honing media outreach
- Enhance activities for Domestic Violence Awareness month in October
- Implement communication strategy/emphasize the work of the DVC at a new level (see social change action graphic)
- Present **Community-wide training** on trauma-informed, victim-centered approaches for judges, court personnel, advocates, providers & law enforcement
- Hold 2026 Legislative Breakfast
- Plan for 2027 Legislative Breakfast
- Regular periodic e-newsletters
- Implement Member Satisfaction Survey
- Reporting provided by Coordinator
- Annual Survivor Survey
- Begin process for 2027-2030 Strategic Plan

*ICJR grant deliverables

Thank you to everyone who participated in the development of this Strategic Plan. Many, many hours of hard work went into the development of this project.

This Plan serves as a guide, not a mandate, and may be revised as needed subject to Executive Board/General Membership approval.

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