
Testimony of Francine Garland Stark
In Support of LD 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crime
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
January 23, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Francine Garland Stark, and I am writing on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence¹ in support of LD 2084 and the need for funding to maintain essential victim services in Maine.

This afternoon you have heard from crime victims, community-based advocacy organizations, health care providers, law enforcement professionals, attorneys, and others describing their interactions with the broad landscape of what we collectively refer to as “advocacy” – all providing eloquent reasons why the services currently funded by the Victims of Crime Act grant in Maine are so critically needed. In addition to those who have testified this afternoon, many more have submitted written testimony, from survivors who have experienced our services as life changing, to statutory bodies like the Family Law Advisory Commission. FLAC asked you to support LD 2084 because “drastic cuts to core services such as these will negatively impact the judicial branch, practitioners, advocates, and victims across Maine.”

Last week, the Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel released its 14th Biennial Report, dedicated to advocates and highlighting the critical need for more – not less advocacy support for our communities. The dedication reads in part “Advocates reinforce a shared commitment to positive outcomes for survivors and/or family members. Whether it’s navigating legal processes, accessing services, or emotional support, their dedication is unwavering.”

It is clear that VOCA-funded services are lifesaving and contribute to the safety and well-being of Mainers across the lifespan. These services are essential interventions to mitigate the impact of and important resources to prevent the experience of child abuse, elder abuse, domestic and sexual violence, exploitation, homicide, and suicide.

¹ MCEDV represents a membership of Maine’s eight regional domestic violence resource centers and two culturally specific service providers. Last year, our programs provided services to more than 12,000 survivors of domestic abuse and violence across the state. Our network manages 13 of the state’s emergency shelters and supports survivors and their children with a wide range of holistic services to help enhance their safety and stability, including housing assistance, legal representation, court advocacy and accompaniment, and a crisis hotline available 24/7.

Over the past 5 decades, grassroots efforts have supported the development of services to meet the needs of crime victims, initially creating community-based non-profits addressing domestic and sexual abuse and violence, subsequently working in collaboration with county and state agencies as federal funds emerged to support the establishment of system-based advocates.

Victims of Crime Act funding is the single largest source of funding in the contract that MCEDV has with the Dept. of Human Services to support the 8 regional Domestic Violence Resource Centers providing comprehensive services for adults and children seeking safety and support. It is the core funding on which everything else is built. Because of the longstanding consistency of funding in our contracts with the state, Maine's network of Domestic Violence Resource Centers has been able to leverage additional, substantial, direct federal grants and private dollars to offer specialized services beyond what the state contract can support. These innovations have been described today – collaborations that have connected advocates with victim/survivors following law enforcement interventions, in emergency rooms with health care providers, and in court, supporting access to justice by helping people navigate the Protection from Abuse Order process, and more.

In 2023, the Regional Domestic Violence Resource Centers provided services to over 15,000 people, more than in any prior year. I have provided the MCEDV Annual Report for your reference, including more details about the services that VOCA supports and what a substantial component it is of the statewide funding picture for these critical services.

We know that, without action, these funding cuts are coming as of October 1, 2024. The Maine Legislature has the ability to protect this vital statewide system of victim services and survivor support from what would be a catastrophic result. That starts with this Committee. We are not asking for more. We are asking to maintain. Please support this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today to talk about the amazing work that's happening in communities across the state.



MCEDV.

The Maine Coalition
to End Domestic Violence

2023 Annual Report

Dear friends,

This report highlights the extraordinary work of Maine advocates in 2023 to meet the immediate and long-term needs of individuals and families escaping abuse. In 2023, they supported over 12,000 survivors, half of whom had children. The report also outlines the work of MCEDV staff who supported advocates and informed impactful, survivor-centered changes in many of Maine's systems. Reflecting on 2023, a year marked with so much tragedy in Maine and beyond, I am grateful for the positive impact that MCEDV has been able to make through our many collaborations, including:

- There is a new system in place to hold to account people prohibited from possessing firearms through Protection from Abuse Orders.
- There is a statewide outreach card appropriate for health care providers to use in asking and educating patients about intimate partner abuse.
- There are updated standards for Certified Domestic Violence Intervention Programs ready for final approval, integrating lessons learned from recent years.
- There is a statewide Rapid Rehousing Program for survivors of domestic abuse.
- There is a short animated film being shown across Maine, featuring one Maine woman's experience, sharing with others messages of encouragement and hope.

The other big news of 2023 is that MCEDV welcomed a new member! Her Safety Net provides services for immigrant, refugee, asylum seeking, and BIPOC survivors of gender-based violence. Taking a public health approach and providing both education and direct services in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways, Her Safety Net expands access to such services in the Lewiston area.

In 2024, we will be working to ensure that the state budget includes critical funding needed to fill a gap resulting from a catastrophic reduction in Maine's Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. For 35 years, VOCA has provided funding for core services to victims of violent crimes. Shortfalls in the federal VOCA fund will impact all forms of victim advocacy in Maine, and for Maine's network of Domestic Violence Resource Centers, this could mean a loss of nearly \$3M per year if not addressed through the state budget process in this year's session. We'll need everyone's help to sustain these vital services.

On any given day, Domestic Violence Resource Center advocates throughout the state are providing critical support for 500 of their fellow Mainers. On behalf of the staff and board of MCEDV, I extend deepest gratitude to everyone who supported our collective work in 2023 and especially to those who have helped someone experiencing abuse to connect with their local MCEDV member for help. Working together we can create a world where respect is our norm, and where all people thrive in their homes and communities - nurtured, healthy, joyful, and free.

Francine Garland Stark, Executive Director

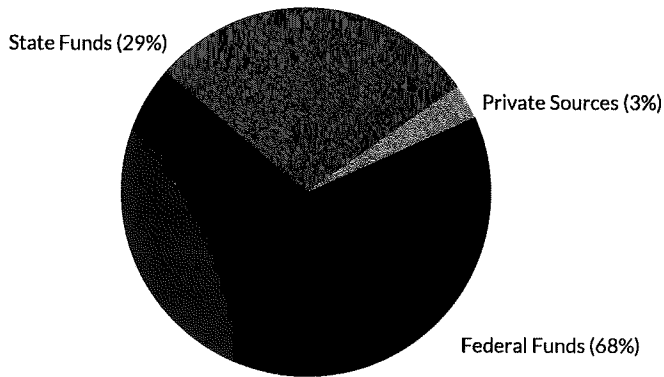
Financial Overview

FY23 REVENUE

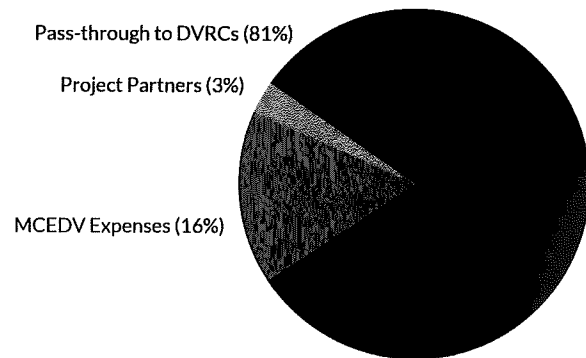
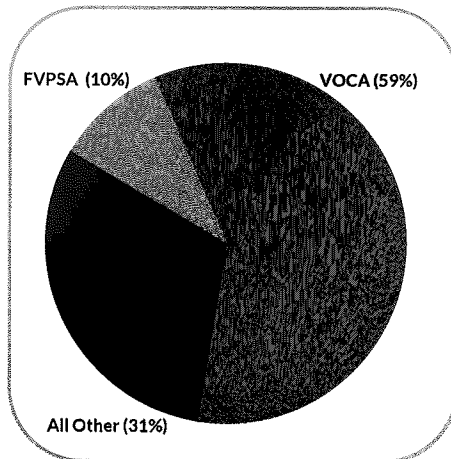
Federal Funds:	\$7,761,498
State Funds:	\$3,239,477
Private Sources	
Restricted:	\$268,622
Unrestricted:	\$108,793
Total Private Sources:	\$377,415
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$11,378,390

FY23 EXPENSES

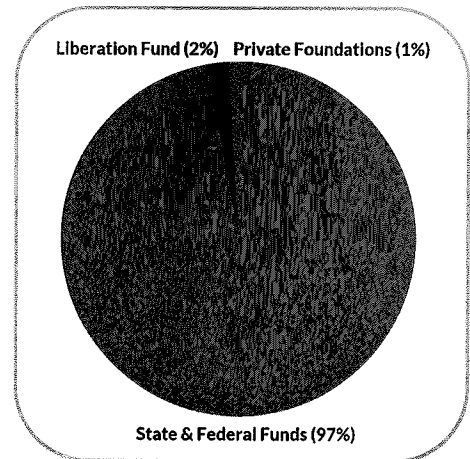
MCEDV Expenses:	\$1,804,385
Pass-through to DVRCs	
Maine DHHS:	\$8,738,113
Direct Federal Grants:	\$248,599
Liberation Fund:	\$161,304
Private Foundations:	\$73,787
Total DVRC pass-through:	\$9,221,803
Project partner pass-through:	\$347,987
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$11,374,175



Federal Funding Sources



Pass-through to DVRCs



(L-R): Deb Chapman & Francine Garland Stark

This financial report is dedicated to Deb Chapman. Behind every effective non-profit is a focused, flexible, ferociously detail-oriented financial mind hard at work. For MCEDV, Deb Chapman has been that extraordinary resource since 2006. She developed the systems necessary for MCEDV to administer the federal and state funds that pass through to the regional Domestic Violence Resource Centers in a consolidated contract with DHHS, helping everyone involved move smoothly through the transition. Words cannot capture the late nights, reams of spreadsheets, and mind-boggling challenges that Deb has conquered. Every step of the way, Deb has been mission centered. For Deb, every well-crafted budget and clean audit has been a through line toward the goal of ending abuse and violence so that we can all be safe and free. Happy retirement, Deb!

Who We Are

The Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence advocates for the right of all people to live free from domestic abuse and all forms of violence. We provide training, consultation, and technical assistance to statewide organizations to enhance their response to domestic abuse. We also support the work of our members, who provide these same services in their local communities. Together, we work to foster a coordinated community response, centered around improving survivor safety and accountability for people who use abusive behavior.



MCEDV STAFF:

Paula Alves, Finance Director | Christina Foster, Data Systems Specialist | Amy Gatchell, Administrative Assistant
Sarah Grant, Grants & Development Director | Hanna Gregory, Housing Services Coordinator | Katie Holzwarth,
Contract Administrator | Andrea Mancuso, Public Policy Director | Kelly O'Connor, Systems Advocacy Director
Regina Rooney, Programming Director | Erika Simonson, Child & Family Programs Coordinator | Francine Garland
Stark, Executive Director | Amanda Taisey, Health Systems Engagement Coordinator | Karen Wyman, Prevention &
Intervention Director

A Year In Review

We have many accomplishments to celebrate in 2023, and below are just some of the highlights. You can read more about our work in 2023 by [visiting our blog](#).



HOUSING: Funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, MCEDV's Rapid Rehousing program launched in mid-2023, providing survivors and their children with rental assistance for up to one year, along with comprehensive advocacy services from their local Domestic Violence Resource Centers (DVRCs).

HEALTHCARE: MCEDV partnered with Maine Center for Disease Control's Public Health Nurses to pilot new Maine-specific resources – the CUES Handout and Healthcare Connections Cards – complementing the CDC's updated and expanded domestic violence response policy.

WORKPLACE RESPONSE: In July, the State of Maine sought MCEDV's guidance to revise the State's mandatory Family and Intimate Partner Violence Workplace Policy Training, which MCEDV played a key role in developing nearly two decades ago.

UNDERSTANDING SURVIVOR-DEFENDANT EXPERIENCES: Focusing on survivors who've used force to resist or react to the abuse they've experienced, the Systems Advocacy Learning Lab provided an opportunity for advocates and intervention program staff to gather data, map system responses, and analyze cases to better understand and improve how our systems impact the lives of survivors and their children.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: Thanks to generous donors, we worked with Emmy-nominated Good Fight Media to interview and record a group of survivors telling their stories of getting free from abuse, creating several powerful public awareness spots, including the short animated film, "[Grey Rock](#)," which promotes the Liberation Fund.

LEARNING FROM ADVOCATES: "Restoryation," a statewide project brought together advocates for daylong storytelling sessions about what it was like working through the COVID-19 pandemic. The project was part of a national needs assessment promoting workforce support and healing, in which 23 other state and territory coalitions participated.

ENHANCING INTERVENTION EFFORTS: MCEDV and the Maine Department of Corrections co-facilitated a multi-disciplinary team to review and update the certification standards for Maine's Domestic Violence Intervention Programs, with an emphasis on increasing equity, access, and clarity.

AT THE STATEHOUSE: In the first regular session of the 131st Maine Legislature, MCEDV supported several new laws that will contribute to safer families in our state, including:

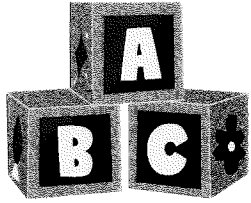
- Requiring that service of a Temporary Protection from Abuse Order be attempted within 48 hours from the issuance of the order. (PL 23, Ch. 75)
- Removing fees for crime victims to get a copy of the police report that resulted from the crime against them. (PL 23, Ch. 235)
- Ensuring improved safety planning and attention to risk by jail personnel determining the eligibility of jail inmates for community confinement monitoring programs. (PL 23, Ch. 250)

SIGN UP



Stay up to date in 2024 by joining our newsletter at: www.mcedv.org!

Improving the Child Welfare System's Response to Domestic Violence



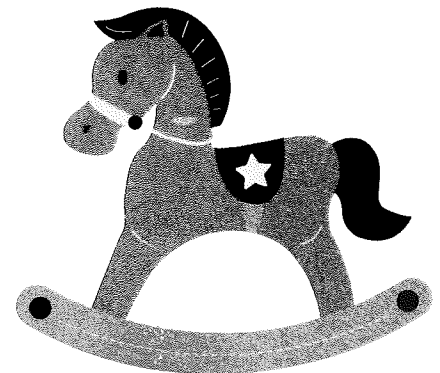
The child welfare system plays a significant role in the lives of many survivors and their children, and it is critical that workers are equipped to understand who is actually creating a risk to a child's wellbeing and respond appropriately when a case involves domestic abuse. MCEDV and our member programs worked hard in 2023 to equip child welfare professionals with the tools they need by providing training and advocacy regarding established best practices.

In 2023, members of MCEDV staff:

- Co-facilitated **10 training sessions** with OCFS' training team for 361 Child Protective Services staff across Maine, including frontline caseworkers and their supervisors, supporting the rollout of OCFS' new Domestic Abuse and Violence Policy.
- Trained over **200** child welfare system legal professionals, including attorneys, guardians ad litem and judicial officers, at the Maine Judicial Branch's Annual Child Welfare Conference, providing a plenary presentation as well as two breakout sessions.
- Regularly participated in all three of Maine's **Child Welfare Citizen Review Panels** and informed recommendations that these panels made to policy makers, state agencies, and Maine's judicial system. MCEDV staff serve on the Justice for Families Task Force, the Child Death and Serious Injury Panel, and the Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel, which is co-chaired by our Public Policy Director.
- Worked with the **Maine Parental Rights Attorneys Association** to increase knowledge of the indigent parent defense bar of the services available across our network and opportunities for systemic collaboration, which resulted in a notable increase in parent attorneys seeking MCEDV's assistance with securing expert witnesses on domestic abuse and violence to support survivors in child welfare litigation.

Also in 2023, as part of our longstanding partnership with the Office of Child and Family Services, Child Protective Services, our Domestic Violence-Child Protective Services liaison program:

- Provided advocacy and support services to **775 individuals** referred by CPS
- Attended **241 Family Team Meetings**
- Had **1,557 consultations** with child welfare professionals
- Trained **251 child welfare professionals** over 26 hours
- Facilitated **85 support groups**



Maine's Domestic Violence Resource Centers

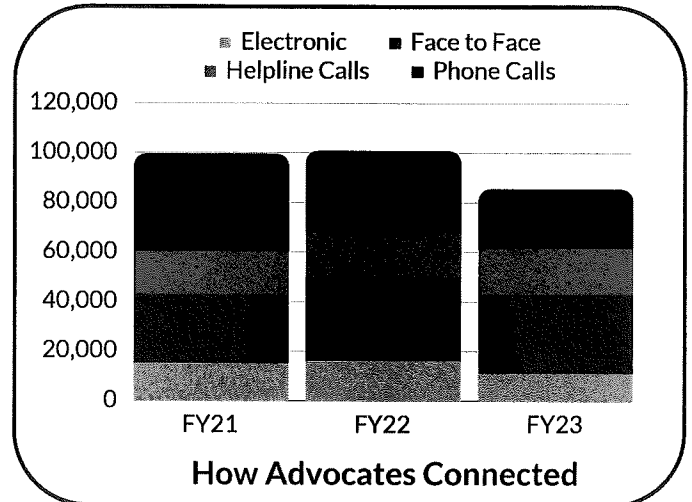
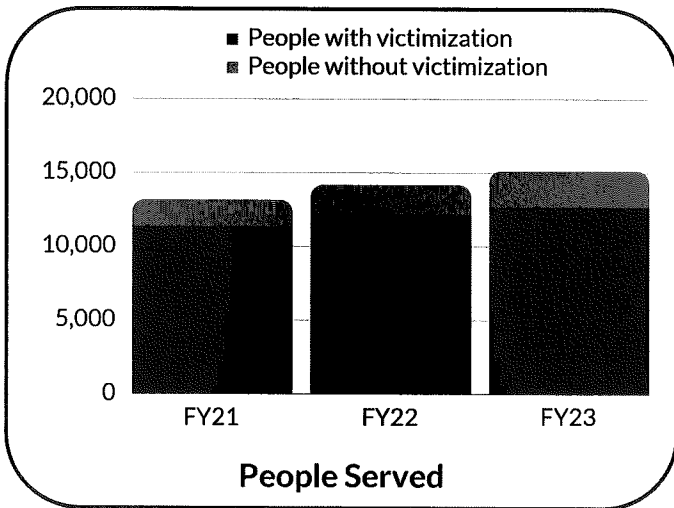
Regional Domestic Violence Resource Centers (DVRCs) provide services for people affected by domestic abuse and violence, dating violence, stalking, elder abuse and sexual exploitation and trafficking. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, via their 24-hour helplines.



In 2023, DVRC advocates helped 15,147 people across Maine.
12,706 people were directly affected by domestic abuse and violence.
50% of survivors had at least one child in the home.

Supporting Survivors

The number of people seeking help from DVRCs increased again this year. Advocates had fewer total contacts with survivors in 2023, a result of the demand for services that can leave them challenged to offer support beyond focusing on urgent safety concerns and basic needs.



9,694 people called our 24-hour helplines, an 11% increase over last year.

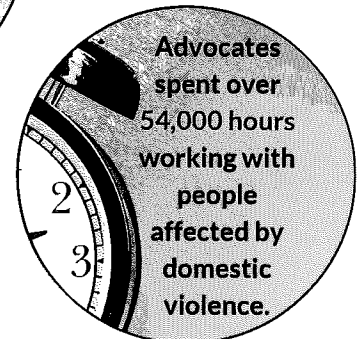
On average...
our helplines received
45 calls per weekday
19 calls per weeknight
31 calls per weekend

Advocates spent
33 minutes responding to each call

Survivors received
1.7 distinct services per contact



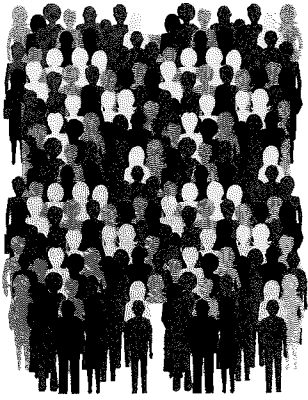
Advocates had 85,565 contacts with survivors



Advocates spent over 54,000 hours working with people affected by domestic violence.

Maine's Domestic Violence Resource Centers

Demographic Information



DVRC services are low barrier, and much of the work happens over the phone. We have complete demographic information for approximately half of the survivors served. Of those for whom we have demographic information, we know that:

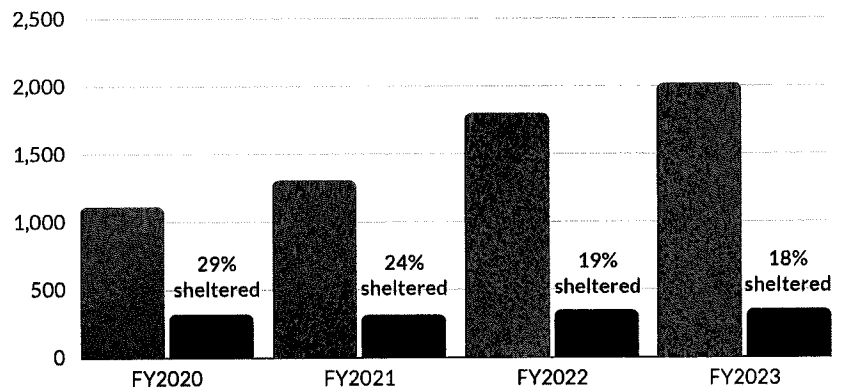
- 10,367 adults identified themselves as female (82%)
- 759 adults identified themselves as male (6%)
- 353 people identified themselves as LGBTQ+, including 85 adults who identified as transgender or non-binary (3%)
- 274 people identified themselves as Black (2%)
- 1,744 people shared they have physical, mental, or cognitive disabilities (14%)
- 227 individuals had Limited English Proficiency (2%)
- 238 people identified themselves as immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers (2%)
- 756 people were over the age of 60 (6%)
- 2,442 people identified themselves as unhoused (19%).

Residential Programs



Shelter requests reached a three year high in 2023, with people typically staying for at least six months as they searched for long-term housing. While DVRCs sheltered proportionally fewer people last year, the overall number sheltered was actually slightly higher in 2023 than in recent years. 1,186 people, which includes 551 children, were served through DVRCs' residential programs such as emergency shelter, transitional support, housing navigation, and homelessness prevention. Advocates helped an additional 1,351 not in residential programs retain or obtain safe housing.

■ # of eligible survivors requesting shelter
■ # of eligible survivors sheltered



Domestic Violence is a leading cause of homelessness.

In 2023, nearly 20% of survivors who accessed DVRC services identified themselves as unhoused.

Comprehensive Support & Advocacy

In 2023:

- Advocates spent more than 12,000 hours providing court advocacy services to 5,044 survivors, helping them navigate the family court system.
- Advocates spent 4,700 hours facilitating support groups for survivors.
- Advocates provided community and prevention education presentations to 1,279 people across the state.

92% of survivors surveyed indicated that they learned strategies to plan for safety after working with advocates.

93% of survivors surveyed reported that advocates helped them learn about community resources.

Join the Movement!

- ✔ Help survivors who are on the path to independence and freedom from abuse by giving to the Liberation Fund.
- ✔ Contribute to the Nancy Gentile Endowment and help ensure long-term sustainability and the flexibility to respond to emerging needs.
- ✔ Provide general support and help us bring the lived experiences of survivors to the tables where laws, policies, and practices that impact survivors and their families are being developed.

Visit <https://www.mcedv.org/donate> to give online.

You can also send a check to:

Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
PO Box 5188, Augusta, ME 04332-5188.

For more information, or if you have questions about giving, please contact Sarah Grant at sarah@mcedv.org.

Thank you to our 2023 donors and supporters!

MCEDV Board of Directors

Daryl Fort, President
Marvin Ellison, Treasurer
Marie Sola, Secretary
Peggy Rotundo

Member Programs

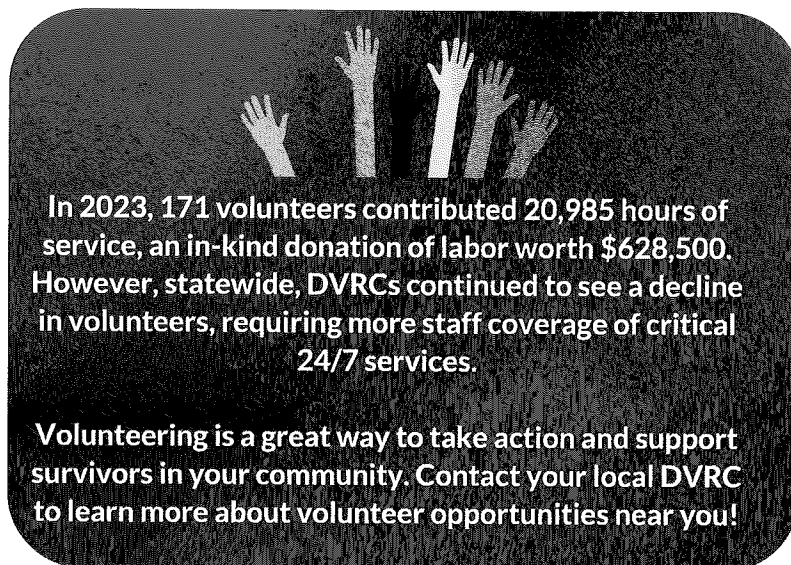
Caring Unlimited
Family Violence Project
Her Safety Net
Hope and Justice Project
Immigrant Resource Center of Maine
New Hope Midcoast
NextStep DV Project
Partners for Peace
Safe Voices
Through These Doors



Learn more about the Liberation Fund and one survivor's story about her path to safety by watching our Grey Rock video.

Stay Connected

Visit www.mcedv.org to learn more and sign up for our newsletter. Contact us at info@mcedv.org or (207) 430-8334.



Reach out for free and confidential support 24/7:

Statewide Helpline: 1-866-834-HELP (4357)

Deaf or Hard of Hearing: 1-800-437-1220