

2023 POLICY PRIORITIES

MARYLAND NETWORK AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MNADV strives to approach legislative and policy reform from an anti-oppression and intersectional lens as we advocate for victims.

SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE FUNDING:

Faced with an overwhelming demand for services combined with an increase in the severity and complexity of violence, we must ensure that service providers have sufficient resources to meet victim needs. The increase in victims seeking services coincides with a temporary dip in federal VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) grant funding which must be remedied at the state level to guarantee that lifesaving services are available for all victims of domestic violence. ***MNADV prioritizes advocating for sustainable and equitable funding at all levels of government to meet both the urgent and long-term needs of domestic violence services providers and those they serve.***

ACCESS TO SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

With more than a third of domestic violence victims experiencing homelessness after leaving their abuser, the ability to access safe and affordable housing is paramount for victims of domestic violence. An inability to access safe and affordable housing is often an insurmountable barrier for a victim attempting to leave a domestic violence situation. Victims often remain in abusive relationships and children are exposed to ongoing violence because they have nowhere safe to go and are at risk of homelessness or housing instability. ***MNADV supports legislation and policies that increase and improve access to safe and affordable housing and flexible funding that enables victims the autonomy to meet their unique needs.***

ECONOMIC JUSTICE:

Domestic violence and economic instability are inextricably linked. While economic stress does not cause the power and control dynamics of domestic violence it can exacerbate the violence. In addition, many victims of domestic violence lack the financial stability and resources to leave an unhealthy or violent relationship and pursue safety. ***MNADV supports measures that promote economic justice and would enable victims of domestic violence to achieve financial independence such as affordable childcare, paid sick leave, and educational opportunities.***

FIREARMS:

Maryland experienced its highest number of domestic violence homicides in over 10 years during 2021, with 58 lives lost due to domestic violence. Firearms were used in 76% of those homicides. The risk of domestic violence homicide increases 1000% with the presence of a firearm. Since the recent Supreme Court decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* which struck down as unconstitutional a NY law and therefore Maryland's law requiring a good and substantial reason to obtain a wear and carry permit for firearms, there has been an exponential increase in the number of wear and carry permit requests filed in Maryland. Ensuring that prohibited persons relinquish firearms is imperative. ***MNADV advocates for reasonable restrictions on access to firearms.***

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE:

Reproductive justice is an essential component of gender equality and for victims of domestic violence abortion access is essential for their safety. The devastating Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* eviscerated the right to bodily autonomy and the right to have an abortion. Access to abortions can be a matter of life or death for victims of domestic violence and pregnant victims are at a higher risk of being killed by their abuser. Victims frequently experience forms of abuse that put them at an increased risk for unintended pregnancy, such as birth control sabotage, sexual assault, and reproductive coercion. ***MNADV remains committed to fighting for reproductive freedom for all people.***

PREVENTION:

Our vision is that one day Maryland will be a State where families and relationships thrive on mutual trust and respect and where there is no place for violence. In furtherance of our vision, we support prevention and intervention measures for intimate partner violence that mitigate risk factors and enhance protective factors. While domestic violence impacts all communities regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, it disproportionately impacts communities of color. To meaningfully prevent domestic violence, we must address the systemic and structural inequities that exist in our society in order to end all forms of oppression and violence. ***MNADV supports initiatives that further our vision of a safe and equitable society that prioritizes prevention efforts and mitigates the risk of domestic violence.***

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT:

Historically the criminal justice system is the primary response to domestic violence, receiving an overwhelming amount of funding and resources. However, criminalization does not effectively deter, prevent, or repair harm caused by domestic violence. The focus of a criminal justice response can be to the detriment of victims of domestic violence, especially those from marginalized communities, who might find themselves the subject of criminal prosecution. ***MNADV supports victim-centered responses to domestic violence that seek to address the root causes of violence including non-carceral options and restorative and transformative justice.***

INTERSECTIONAL AREAS OF INTEREST:

There are numerous issues and systems that intersect and impact victims of domestic violence. MNADV will focus attention on additional legislative measures that seek to improve responses to domestic violence including civil remedies, family law, privacy protections, human trafficking, and immigration rights. ***We are committed to ending systems of oppression and supporting responses to domestic violence that promote safety and equity and will support legislation that furthers that objective.***

WHAT WE DO NOT SUPPORT:

MNADV will not support legislation or policies that will interrupt a pathway to safety for victims of domestic violence. We will analyze all legislation to ensure it is grounded in equity and there are no foreseen intended or unintended consequences for already marginalized populations.

MNADV is the federally recognized state domestic violence coalition for Maryland. We bring together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens.

Note: MNADV uses the word victim in certain policy documents to be consistent with the Maryland Constitution and statutes. We empower each individual to use the terminology that is most comfortable to them.

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