



20 25

Annual Report











The Center

for Empowerment and Education

About Us

For victims of interpersonal violence (IPV), The Center for Empowerment and Education (CEE) provides support services in the form of no cost counseling and advocacy, crisis intervention, and emergency shelter. We empower individuals to find their voice and choose their path toward healing as they rebuild their lives. We are preventing and reducing IPV in the community through prevention education, awareness and are reducing trauma by stopping violence from manifesting in the first place. Everyone deserves to live a life free from violence. We are here to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Our mission is to break the cycle of interpersonal violence through empowerment, education, and support services utilizing inclusive, trauma-informed, and client-centered practices for all individuals in the community.

Our vision is to create safer communities free from interpersonal violence for all individuals in Northern Fairfield and Southern Litchfield Counties.

We serve the needs of individuals and families in the Northern Fairfield and Southern Litchfield County communities of Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury. New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield, Roxbury, and Sherman.

What is interpersonal violence?

Interpersonal violence refers to any abusive act by a person or persons against another, including sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence, and human trafficking. IPV is rooted in power and control. IPV affects people of all identities and backgrounds, but people in marginalized communities face unique barriers to accessing/receiving support.

Guiding Principles

- **Empowerment:** Empowering individuals to find their voice and choose their path towards healing as they rebuild their lives from interpersonal violence.
- **Education:** Preventing and reducing interpersonal violence in the community through prevention education and awareness.
- **Survivor Centered:** Uplifting the voices of lived experience to impact systemic change.
- **Social Change:** Actively working to shift the culture that allows interpersonal violence to thrive.
- **Collaboration:** Building safer communities through collaboration centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion.





CEE Leadership Team

Pictured from left to right:

Samantha Flynn

Chief Development Officer

Ashley Dunn

President & CEO

Abilene Ribeiro

Director of Client Support Services

Cara During

Director of Community Impact

Bill Montero

Chief Finance & Administrative Officer

CEE staff in attendance at our Annual Dinner

From the President and CEO

It is hard to believe that another year has passed, and what a year it has been. This year has been a true Spark for Change at The Center for Empowerment and Education. Not only did we embrace change, but we also celebrated it. This past year, we took inventory of who we are as an organization and how we fit into the community. We began to identify how we want to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of the clients and communities we serve.

As we dug into who we are, we unearthed the reality of our work and underlying themes of who we are at our core. We empower individuals to find their voice and choose their path toward healing as they rebuild their lives from interpersonal violence (IPV). We are preventing and reducing IPV in the community through prevention education, awareness and are reducing trauma by stopping violence from manifesting in the first place. Simultaneously, we are elevating the voices of those with lived experience within our organization and for the clients we serve.

Throughout this process, we reimagined what our hiring and professional development efforts should look like to ensure that we have the resources to meet the needs of our programs, services, and clients. We increased bilingual and multilingual positions throughout all programs and services to ensure that clients coming to CEE can speak in their primary languages of Spanish and Portuguese. We embodied and honored intersectionality in our own workplace, understanding that we as employees are not one-dimensional but have varying needs as individuals. We created pathways to professional development, created a pipeline for new employees through current volunteers and interns, and looked first to our current talent for any leadership and promotional opportunities before exploring external candidates.

As we gained a new understanding of the changing needs of the community and clients we serve, we took the opportunity to realign our programs and services to meet those needs better. We developed the Community Impact Team that focuses on outreach to the community, prevention education classes to youth and adults, professional training to local businesses, and enhanced community engagement opportunities through revamped volunteer opportunities in both direct service and non-direct service capacities. On the direct services side of our work, we shifted our language away from Victim Service programs to Client Support Services, understanding that each person we serve identifies differently from the next person and might not want to be labeled utilizing victim language. While understanding that each client has a different experience from the next, we recognized that we needed to adjust how we helped clients navigate through their trauma by creating Bilingual Crisis Navigation positions that immediately help triage and connect clients to the right resources, safety plan, and ensure that they are aware of all their options, while empowering them to make decisions independently.

We sparked change internally, and that rippled into the community. We increased collaboration with other service providers in our region, created new opportunities for referrals for additional services, and developed new partnerships to help bridge service gaps in the community. We know that IPV is a public health emergency and that no one organization can solve community problems independently. It takes working together as a community to create long-lasting, impactful change. You are

a part of a community that is developing solutions, working together, working with us, and sparking change. You are a part of why we believe we can turn our vision to create safer communities free from IPV into a reality. I cannot thank you enough for your continued support. It means the difference between being able to provide our no cost services in our community.

With gratitude,

Ashley Dunn, MS, MFT, NCC President and CEO



On January 10, 2023, CEO, Ashley Dunn, CCADV, and several member organizations joined Senator Blumenthal to acknowledge his efforts that led to an essential increase in VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) funds at the federal level.

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Client Support Services

How We Helped in the Past Year

24-Hour Hotlines

• Our two 24-hour hotlines are dedicated to domestic violence and sexual assault crisis calls.

On-Site Emergency Response

- In hospitals, police departments, courts, and other community partners, CEE provides on-site support and advocacy.
- We offer a safe and secure emergency shelter environment for individuals and families fleeing domestic and sexual violence. Individuals and families residing in our facility are provided with case management, advocacy, and re-housing assistance.

Crisis Navigation and Advocacy

- Our Family Violence Victim Advocates and Crisis Navigators are available to help victims of interpersonal violence navigate the civil and criminal legal system surrounding intimate partners, parents, children, someone they have or have had a dating relationship with, cohabitants in a spousal or sexual relationship, or the parent of their child(ren).
- We can help explore options and provide legal advocacy in the form of understanding Protective Orders, Temporary Restraining Orders, and provide connections to divorce and custody resources. Our Family Violence Victim Advocates are here to ensure that a victim's voice is heard throughout the court process.
- We also provide client referrals to other community resources.

Ongoing Support

- We offer individual short-term counseling for adults and children to navigate the trauma of violence. We also offer ongoing support groups for victims of interpersonal violence. Support groups are offered in-person and virtually at various locations.
- CEE helps victims defuse an immediate crisis and implement safety plans, ensuring their health and safety needs are met.

Walk-In Services

• CEE offers walk-ins/open appointments at our main office located at 2 West Street, Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm.

Statistics tell us about the reality of what is happening in our community. The numbers below represent real people – our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

Domestic Violence (DV) Clients Total DV Services Provided	3,913 25,823 service contacts
Sexual Assault (SA) Clients Total SA Services Provided	541 4,217
Resource Services Clients (RS) (CEE connected clients to external resources) Total Resource Services Provided	564 703
Client Total (DV, SA, RS) Total Services Provided (DV+SA+RS)	5,018 30,743

Program Statistics

Patricia House 24-Bed Emergency Shelter

51 individuals fleeing from abuse received safe and secure housing.

Adults - 28

Children - 23

289 individuals were transported, relocated and/or sheltered to an undisclosed location.

Housing Assistance

112 individuals were housed independently by CEE's Rapid Rehousing Program.

Legal Advocacy

(Our legal advocacy work is done from our offices at Danbury Superior Court, Danbury Police Department and Main Office)

1,894 domestic violence victims were assisted in obtaining criminal and civil legal assistance including protective orders, restraining orders, visitation, housing, custody, and child support.

373 sexual assault victims received criminal and civil advocacy support services.

2,222 victims were provided with enhanced legal advocacy through the criminal justice and civil legal system.

Client Support Services continued

Crisis Response

Hotline & Crisis Calls

2,573 calls required immediate crisis response and intervention (DV - 2,292, SA - 281).

Multi-Interdisciplinary Team (MIT)

93 families were accompanied by MITs for suspected child abuse and neglect cases.

Medical Accompaniment

112 victims were assisted in the hospital and on medical emergency calls.

Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

597 LAP Screens were conducted by Law Enforcement in partnership with CEE.

289 LAP Screens were identified as High Danger based on victim's responses.

43 LAP identified victims continued services with CEE.



Abilene Ribeiro, Director of Client Support Services, and Attorney Patrice Hamilton. Greater Danbury Bar Association Law Day on May 5, 2023, when Patrice was recognized for her pro-bono services. Patrice, CEE thanks you!

Community Impact

Our Community Impact team is responsible for CEE's prevention education and programming for youth, training for adults and professionals, volunteer programs, and campus services. This also includes legislative advocacy, communicating with the media/press, and cultivating and maintaining relationships with key community stakeholders and partner organizations.

TOTAL COMMUNITY IMPACT PROGRAMS = 793
TOTAL UNDUPLICATED COMMUNITY IMPACT PARTICIPANTS = 18,083*

*Includes 522 school staff/faculty present during programs

Prevention education, training, and outreach



CEE staff provides a professional training to school staff and faculty on how to support student survivors of interpersonal violence.

Our prevention education, training, and outreach services include programs in schools, organizations, local businesses, and the general community. Our education programs and trainings cover topics related to interpersonal violence such as healthy relationships, consent, boundaries, bystander intervention, trauma, and so much more. We tailor each program to the unique audience and age group. We provide education from ages 5 to 80. Our outreach services also include tabling at fairs, connecting with local resources, and providing CEE 101 information to the community. We provide training to professionals in the community that equips employees in their unique field of work to be able to better identify and support survivors of interpersonal violence.

Community Impact

Campus services

Our campus services are provided mainly at our satellite office at Western Connecticut State University and include crisis intervention and support, individual counseling and advocacy, support groups, and education and awareness on campus. We also provide support at the Danbury campus of Naugatuck Valley Community College. We work collaboratively with the many different resources on campus to ensure students are aware of their rights and options if they ever experience interpersonal violence during their time at college. We also prioritize raising awareness through events and programs on various topics, including healthy relationships and consent, bystander intervention, and more.



CEE staff providing an education program for the WCSU Football Team on healthy relationships, consent, and bystander intervention.

Program Disclosures

A disclosure is any instance where a student shares that they have been impacted by interpersonal violence directly or indirectly. This can include when a student shares in the middle of class as we are discussing topics or if they come up afterwards to talk about a specific instance to seek support or guidance. The below disclosures we received were related to dating abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, bullying, LGBTQ+ issues, or mental health concerns.

	K-12	College
TOTAL	166	8

Volunteer Programs

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization, and we could not do what we do without their support. We offer the opportunity for volunteers to work with clients directly and become a "direct service" volunteer as well as the opportunity to become a "non-direct service" volunteer. All direct service volunteers undergo our 40+ hour certification training to become a state-certified domestic violence and sexual assault counselor per C.G.S. 52-146k.

Volunteers & Hours

As an organization with an evolving and growing need, our volunteers help us to meet the high demand for our services, increasing capacity where it is otherwise full. Volunteers also help us to expand our services so that we can reach more individuals and families in our communities.

Client Support Service	Non-Direct Service
Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Hours
966	2,092

TOTAL 3,058

"Nothing feels better than to know that you have been there for a victim when they most need someone to hold space for them and advocate for them. It is the most fulfilling volunteer 'job' that I do. A staff member is always available to the volunteer whenever needed - just as a client is never left without assistance, neither are the volunteers."

- Jean, Volunteer at CEE since 2019



CEE volunteers and a staff member at a Pride Month tabling event in Ridgefield.



Pictured from left to right: Cara Mackler, CEE Director of Community Impact; Jean Hartnett, CEE Volunteer and Abilene Ribeiro, CEE Director of Client Support Services. Volunteer Jean Hartnett was awarded as one of CCADV's First 100 Plus Class of 2023.

Town by Town

Town By Town	
Town	Total
Bethel	2,216
Bridgewater	131
Brookfield	275
Danbury	10,325
New Fairfield	674
New Milford	798
Newtown	2,668
Redding	980
Ridgefield	2,567
Roxbury	83
Sherman	281
Out of State	290
Unknown	911
Other CT	902

23,101 Control of the state of

These numbers reflect both direct service and prevention education individuals served.

Notes of Gratitude

"I wanted to just thank you all at CEE for providing such great presentations to our 4th and 5th graders here at King Street! Our staff and students, both, enjoyed the presentations! We have received great feedback and have started having important conversations with our students. I will surely reach out again next school year. Thank you so much!" - Social Worker, Danbury Public Schools

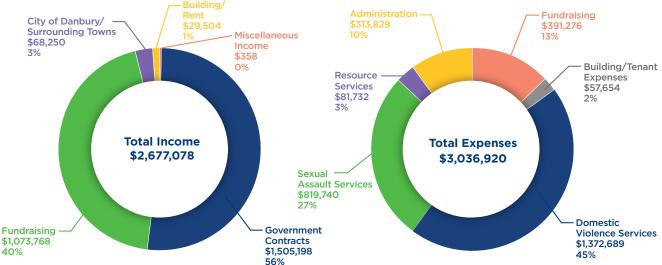
"An unbelievable program that students can take away to apply life-long skills of understanding how to make appropriate choices. The presenters are engaging, compassionate and knowledgeable." - Teacher, Newtown Public Schools

"I truly cannot thank you enough for what you did for me. Thank you for being so trustworthy. This was a difficult process and I felt very alone. You made it so much more tolerable and were very helpful. I feel a huge weight lifted and looking forward to moving on." - Client

Finance

CEE





Save the Dates!

16th Hearts of Hope Breakfast Wednesday, March 6, 2024

21st Annual Dinner Friday, June 14, 2024

SafeWalk Weekend of October 4-6, 2024



CEE

Our complete donor and member lists can be found in the online version of our annual report at www.thecenterct.org

Creating safer communities free from interpersonal violence.



Sexual Assault Hotline: 203-731-5204 | Domestic Violence Hotline: 203-731-5206 | www.TheCenterCT.org

For more information contact us at thecenter@TheCenterCT.org



Phone: 203-731-5200 Fax: 203-731-5207



thecenter@TheCenterCT.org



2 West Street Danbury, CT 06810

2023 The Center Annual Report Donors

We thank you for your financial contributions that enable CEE to continue its important work to "create safer communities free from interpersonal violence." Every effort has been made to list names accurately. Please contact the Development Office T (203) 731-5200, EXT. 237 if there are any errors or omissions and please accept our apologies. Again, we thank you for your continued support of CEE's programs and services.

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