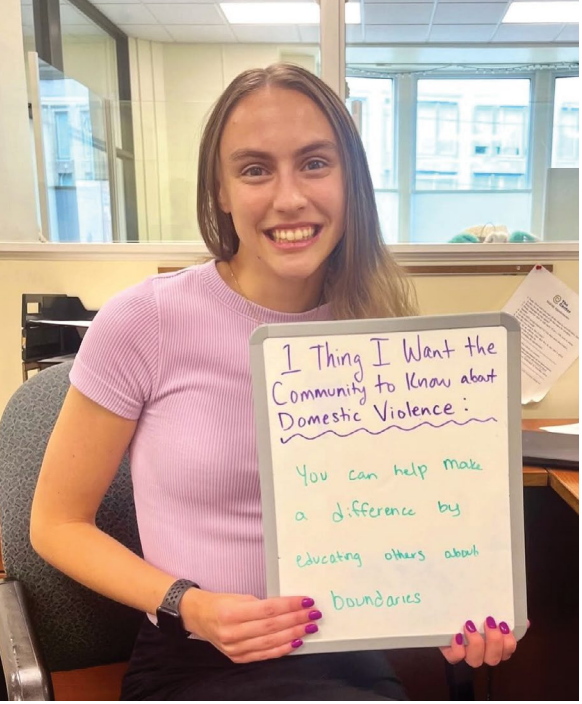


The Center
for Empowerment and Education







Prevention to Possibility





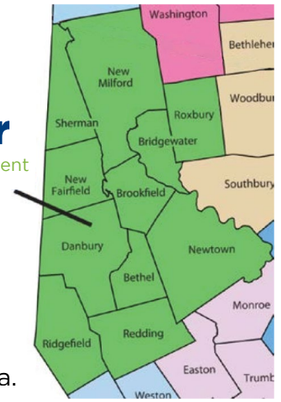




2026 ANNUAL REPORT

About Us

The Center for Empowerment and Education

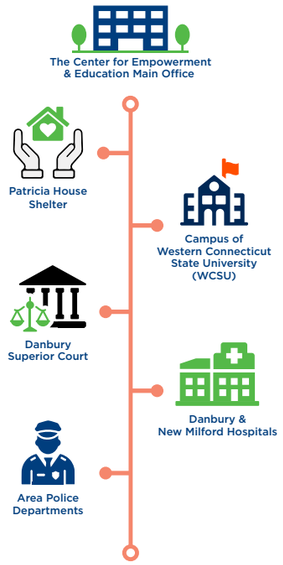


The 11 towns shaded ■ are CEE's catchment area.

Our mission is to break the cycle of interpersonal violence through empowerment, education, and support support services 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.

Where We Help



What is Interpersonal Violence?

Interpersonal violence (IPV) 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 and receiving support.

Throughout this report, our services are referred to as Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DVSA) Programs. Even though we refer to our work as DVSA in the report, our work includes supporting victims of human trafficking and stalking.

At a Glance

Total Clients Served:
2,199

Hotline Calls
552

Hospital Accompaniments
83

Hours of Service
14,643

Community Members Reached through Community Impact
26,829

Volunteer Hours
4,987



Denim Day 2026: an international campaign held every April to raise awareness about sexual assault and correct misconceptions surrounding it.

Empowerment Story:

When a young mother experiencing abuse became increasingly isolated from family and support systems, a concerned loved one reached out seeking help. With no local network to rely on, the young mother faced an uncertain and dangerous situation while caring for her infant child.

Working closely with law enforcement and community partners, CEE's advocacy team helped her safely leave the abusive environment, access emergency shelter and basic necessities, and navigate the legal protections available to her. Through coordinated support and rapid intervention, she was able to secure safety for herself and her child and begin planning for their future.

Today, she has reunited with family in a safe location and is building a new life free from violence.

This is what prevention to possibility looks like: *when survivors have access to support, advocacy, and a community that believes them, fear can give way to safety, stability, and hope.*

From Our Executive Director



Dear CEE Friends,

I am delighted to share our 2025-2026 annual report with you. Although I joined CEE at the end of the fiscal year, I'm incredibly proud of the work that was done, the community we serve and the impact you made possible.

In the few short months that I have been at CEE I've witnessed the dedication of the staff and the passion for helping others that lives strongly in this community. Every day of the year, CEE is here, providing confidential, no-cost services to survivors and their families when they need us. I've watched our prevention educators stop violence before it starts by bringing the importance of healthy relationships and boundaries to life through their interactive "Act Out!" program. I've seen advocates meet clients where they're at and share new options for a path forward. I've celebrated clients as they moved out of shelter and began imagining new possibilities for their futures. Your support helps make this work possible, 365 days a year, creating journeys from prevention to possibility.

As you turn the pages of this report, I hope you share my pride in the work you made possible. More importantly, I hope you take the time to see and hear survivors. I hope this report inspires you to keep listening, keep believing, and keep fighting for a safer future for all.

Warmly,

Kelly Rybczyk
Executive Director

From Our Chairperson



Dear Friends,

We were fortunate this year to welcome Kelly Rybczyk as our new Executive Director. Throughout our leadership transition, one thing never changed: CEE's commitment to our mission and the people and communities we serve.

People turn to CEE during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. They find safety, advocacy and counseling, someone to answer the phone at any hour, and education designed to prevent violence. That work continued without interruption because of the steadfast commitment of our staff and community.

I especially want to recognize our interim leadership team of Bill Montero, Carly Martin, and Samantha Flynn. They provided stability and continuity while keeping our staff, survivors, and mission at the center of their work. The Board is grateful for their leadership. We are excited to build on this strong foundation with Kelly, whose experience, compassion, and collaborative leadership are already making a difference.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on strengthening support for survivors, expanding prevention education, and working toward safer communities. On behalf of the Board, thank you to everyone who makes this work possible. We are excited for CEE's next chapter and look forward to creating safer communities together.

With gratitude,

Erin Byrne
Chair, CEE Board of Directors

Board of Directors



From left to right: Elvis Novas, Susan Gessner, Imranul Haque, Kelly Garretson, Kelcey Hoyt, Erin Byrne, Vicki Taylor-Bloch, Amanda Bristol, Jennifer Miller-Morse, Dayna Beylouni White, Chelen Reyes, Greg Pepin, Dr. Reed Idriss

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Erin Byrne

Vice Chairperson/Development Chair
Vicki Taylor-Bloch

Treasurer
Kelcey Hoyt

Secretary
Amanda Bristol

Dr. Paul Fiedler
Kelly Garretson
Susan Gessner
Imranul Haque
Dr. Reed Idriss
Jennifer Miller-Morse, Esq.
Elvis Novas
Greg Pepin
Chelen Reyes
Dayna Beylouni White

Ambassadors Council



From left to right: Eva Aveiga, Glori Norwitt, Esq., John Royce, Stacy Singer, Lori Berisford, Gina Colavolpe, Karen Ross, Lisa Esneault, Katy Oakhill, Allison Solis-Ruiz, Pamela Chapman, Stacey Keaney, Brenda Berta, Kathy Graham, Dr.Evan Hack, Rudy Marconi

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Deborah Backes
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Karen Ross
John Royce
Stacy Singer
Alexa Skalandunas
Allison Solis-Ruiz
Paul Steinmetz
Eileen Walker

Paul P. Dinto - Honorary member

CEE Senior Leadership



Pictured from left to right:

William Montero
Chief Finance Officer

Kelly Rybczyk
Executive Director

Samantha Flynn
Chief Development Officer

Carly Martin
Chief Program Officer

CEE Leadership



Pictured from left to right:

Cristina Cabral
Manager of Community Impact

Jenny Diaz
Manager of Crisis and Advocacy

Shayna Hopkins
Manager of Residential Services

Fatima Almeida
Operations and Facilities Manager

Linda Cummins
Fundraising and Events Manager

Community Impact

Prevention and Outreach

Prevention is the first step toward possibility. Through education, outreach, and community partnerships, we work to build awareness, strengthen healthy relationships, and address the root causes of DVSA. By fostering understanding, encouraging accountability, and expanding access to support, we help create communities where individuals feel safe, empowered, and valued. Together, these efforts open the door to new possibilities, breaking cycles of violence and creating pathways to a safer, more hopeful future.

People Reached	
Number of Prevention Education and Training Participants	21,228
Number of People Reached through Outreach Activities	5,601
Total	**26,829**



Survivor Awareness Art Gallery at WCSU



Act Out Program at WCSU

Total Community Impact Activities/Programs	
Education & Training Programs Provided	734
Outreach Activities	172
Total	**906**

From Prevention to Possibility:
Through education and outreach, we help individuals recognize healthy relationships, access resources, and build safer futures.

Community Impact

Each year, CEE tracks the number and types of disclosures made by individuals, including youth, following participation in our prevention education programs and outreach activities. Our educators are certified counselors trained to respond when someone shares concerns related to DVSA. These disclosures reflect the safe, supportive environments our programs foster, turning prevention into possibility by creating opportunities for youth to seek help, access resources, and begin their path toward safety and healing.

Education Programs Disclosures:	
Dating Abuse	18
Domestic Violence	15
Sexual Assault	8
Sexual Abuse	7
Sexual Harassment	2
Stalking	2
Bullying	13
Mental Health Issues/Concerns	11
Total No. of Disclosures	76

Outreach Activities Disclosures:	
Dating Abuse	2
Domestic Violence	8
Sexual Assault	0
Sexual Abuse	4
Sexual Harassment	2
Stalking	0
Bullying	0
Mental Health Issues/Concerns	7
Total No. of Disclosures	23

Seven Years Later: Prevention's Lasting Impact:

At New Milford's Picnic for Pride, a community member stopped by CEE's table to share how meaningful it was to see us participating in the event. During the conversation, they reflected on the prevention education they received as a student at New Milford High School, describing the experience as deeply impactful.

What stood out most was not only their appreciation for the program, but the fact that its lessons remained with them years later. "Please never stop what you're doing," they shared. "I still think of the impact seven years later."

Moments like these remind us that prevention extends far beyond the classroom. The knowledge, skills, and confidence gained through education can stay with young people long after a program ends, influencing how they navigate relationships, support others, and advocate for healthy, safe communities. This encounter is a powerful example of how prevention creates possibility, leaving a lasting impression that continues to shape lives years into the future.

Direct Service Impact

Client Support Services

Total Clients Served:
2,199

Type of Perpetration Known:
Domestic Violence: **82%**
Sexual Assault: **18%**

Total Client Interactions:
19,505

14,643 Hours
Of Service Provided

Crisis Intervention

Domestic Violence Hospital Accompaniments:
51

Sexual Assault Hospital Accompaniments:
32

From Crisis to Possibility:
When a survivor of human trafficking contacted CEE for help, a Child & Family Advocate provided compassionate support during a forensic examination and connected the survivor with emergency lodging and essential resources. With continued advocacy and support, the survivor is taking important steps toward safety, stability, and greater independence.

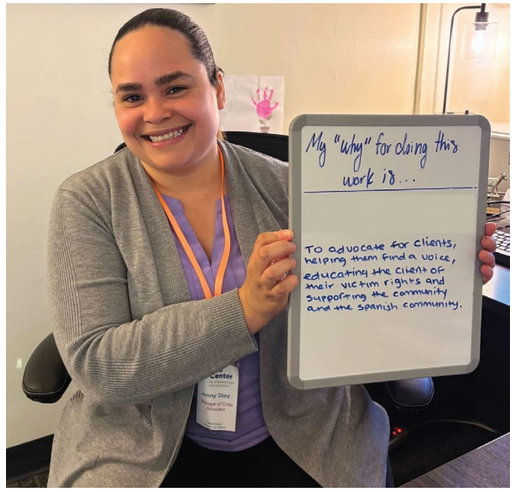
Hospital advocacy provides immediate crisis intervention, emotional support, and resource referrals for victims of DVSA. Advocates are available 24/7 to respond to hospitals, support victims during forensic evidence collection, and help ensure victims are treated with dignity, informed of their rights, and connected to services that promote safety and healing.

From Prevention to Possibility:
When survivors have access to advocacy, counseling, and support, possibility becomes healing, stability, and hope.

Direct Service Impact

Court Advocacy & Legal Support

Court advocacy helps survivors navigate the criminal and civil justice systems, understand their rights, and access legal options and resources. CEE advocates supported **875 victims** pursuing justice through the criminal justice system and attended **948 arraignments** to provide critical support at the start of legal proceedings. CEE's specialized Court Advocates also dedicated **155 hours assisting 180 victims** involved in civil legal matters. Through partnerships with Connecticut Legal Services and Family Law Legal Consult, CEE helps ensure survivors receive the legal support they need on their path toward safety, justice, and healing.



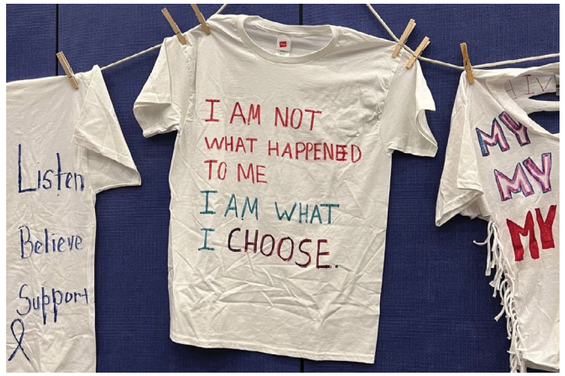
Jenny Diaz, CEE Manager of Crisis and Advocacy

When Advocacy Leads to Safety:

CEE's Family Violence Victim Advocate (FVVA) supported a survivor whose case began with misdemeanor charges related to disorderly conduct and criminal mischief. What initially appeared to be a relatively limited legal matter quickly escalated, highlighting the critical role an FVVA can play in recognizing patterns of escalating harm and ensuring that the survivor's safety concerns are not overlooked.

Throughout the case, the FVVA worked closely with the survivor to document and communicate violations, helping ensure that prosecutors and other members of the legal system had a fuller understanding of what was occurring in the home. When the perpetrator violated a Residential Stay Order, the FVVA took immediate action, meeting directly with the public defender, judge, and State's Attorney to provide context and advocate for the survivor. By bringing the survivor's lived experience and ongoing safety concerns into the courtroom, the FVVA helped ensure that decision-makers had a more complete picture of the circumstances surrounding the case. Through ongoing advocacy, a full no-contact order was put in place, granting the survivor and her family, ongoing protection and peace.

Campus Support



Clothesline Project at WCSU to raise awareness of DVSA

At our satellite office at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU), we offer crisis intervention, individual counseling and advocacy, support groups, and educational programming. We collaborate closely with campus partners to ensure students are informed about their rights and the resources available to them if they experience DVSA during their time at college.

CEE advocates served **27 campus clients** with short-term crisis counseling, **1 Title IX accompaniment/advocacy service** and **1 Judicial Hearing accompaniment.**

The Power of MITs: Protecting Our Children

When a child discloses abuse, a coordinated response is essential. Through **Multidisciplinary Investigative Teams (MITs)**, CEE partners with law enforcement, child protection, medical professionals, prosecutors, and advocates to ensure children are supported throughout the investigative process. This collaborative approach reduces re-traumatization, improves communication among agencies, and keeps the child's well-being at the center of every step.

MIT Accompaniments:

68

Type of Perpetrators:

61%
Family Members

39%
Coaches, teachers, family friends, peers, neighbors, etc.

Direct Service Impact

Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

Through the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), CEE partners with local law enforcement to identify the level of danger victims face during domestic violence incidents and connect them to advocacy services immediately. This collaborative response provides timely safety planning, crisis support, and access to resources that can help prevent future harm.

584
LAP calls

92%
Scored as high danger

247
Hours of Law Enforcement Advocacy

Support Groups

Clients Participated in Support Groups	**121**
Advocate Hours Spent in Groups	**332**
Number of Support Group Sessions	**257**

Support groups provided survivors with a safe, trauma-informed space for healing, connection, and empowerment, with offerings tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities.



Thanking our local law enforcement during the month of October in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Direct Service Impact

Residential Services

CEE provides a safe emergency shelter for individuals and families escaping DVSA. Residents receive comprehensive support, including case management, advocacy, safety planning, and housing assistance, helping them move from crisis and uncertainty toward safety, stability, and new possibilities.

Shelter Services

Children Served	**16**
Adults Served	**25**
Over Capacity Housing	**22**
Total Clients who Received Shelter Services	**63**

Rapid Re-Housing

Our Rapid Re-Housing Program continues to be a vital component of this support system, helping clients transition into permanent housing and work toward long-term stability and independence.

Rapid Re-Housing Individuals Served: 31

From Safety to Self-Sufficiency:
While residing in shelter, one survivor set a goal of turning a creative talent into a source of income and independence. With support from a CEE advocate, the survivor explored opportunities to market handmade products, connect with community resources, and develop plans for growing a small business.

Through ongoing advocacy, encouragement, and resource navigation, the survivor gained confidence in personal strengths and entrepreneurial potential. This journey highlights how individualized, strengths-based support can help survivors move beyond crisis, build financial independence, and create new possibilities for a stable and empowered future.



Patricia House Shelter Staff in blue for Human Trafficking Awareness Day in January

Legislative Impact



The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence press conference at the State Capitol

Creating Safer Futures Through Advocacy:

CEE advocates for policies that remove barriers to safety, strengthen survivor rights, and create pathways to stability and opportunity. During the legislative session, we supported several key initiatives that sought to improve protections and outcomes for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking. While these bills did not receive final passage, their advancement reflects growing recognition of the challenges survivors face and the need for meaningful reform.

Legislative Priorities Supported:

- Survivor privacy and safety
- Fair treatment in the justice system
- Access to safe and stable housing

Legislative Highlight: Removing Barriers to Safety

Among the legislation passed this year of particular importance to CEE's work is Public Act No. 26-112. Concern for the safety and well-being of a pet can be a significant barrier for survivors considering leaving an abusive situation or seeking emergency shelter. This new law will help CEE connect survivors with appropriate resources, helping to remove one more barrier on their path toward safety and independence.



For many of us, pets are beloved members of the family. Meet Fig, the pet chinchilla of one of CEE's Prevention Educators!

Looking Ahead:

From preventing harm to creating new possibilities, legislative advocacy remains a critical part of CEE's mission. By supporting policies that enhance safety, promote justice, and expand housing stability, we continue working toward a future where every survivor has the opportunity to heal, thrive, and build a life free from violence.

Town by Town Individuals Served

Town	Community Impact	Community Services
Bethel	2,380	130
Bridgewater	78	3
Brookfield	1,062	68
Danbury	11,513	1,235
New Fairfield	358	66
New Milford	2,150	124
Newtown	1,165	137
Redding	1	20
Ridgefield	2,240	87
Roxbury	88	2
Sherman	1	12
Out of State/Unknown/Other CT	5,793	315
Total	**26,829**	**2,199**

29,028
Served





SafeWalk Returns to Our Communities

This year marked the exciting return of in-person SafeWalks across our region. Walks in Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury, New Milford, Newtown, and Ridgefield brought supporters together to raise awareness, strengthen community connections, and generate critical funds to support CEE's mission.

Volunteers & Interns



Volunteer Appreciation Event

Volunteer Hours

2,398
Non-Direct Services

2,589
Direct Services

4,987
Total Hours

32
Volunteers & Interns

10
New Volunteers

Not including Board Members or Development Volunteers



Ann Marie Moreira, CEE Volunteer & Survivor Engagement Coordinator tabling at a Linde ERG Fair.

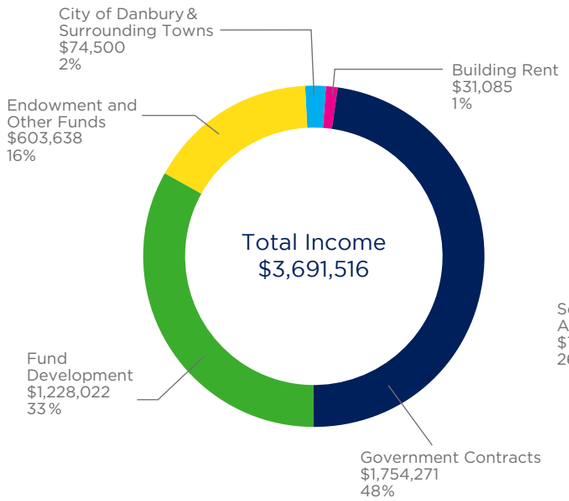
Volunteers: The Heart of CEE

Our volunteers play an essential role in helping CEE meet the needs of our community. Direct Service volunteers provide critical support to individuals experiencing violence, while Non-Direct Service volunteers support our outreach, awareness, and community efforts.

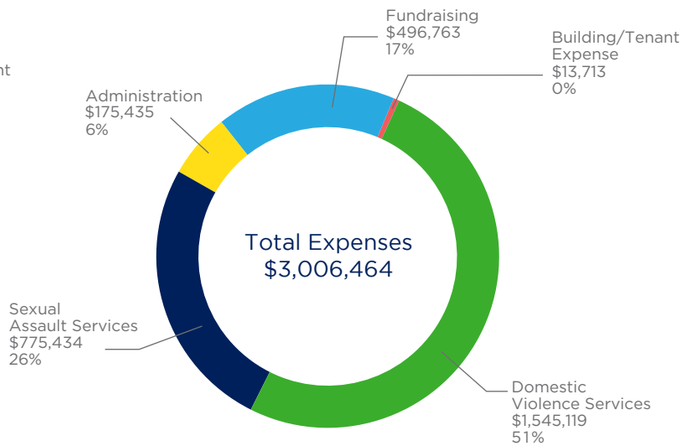
Our upcoming Volunteer Info Sessions will provide the information and tools you need to get involved. We hope to see you there!

Finance

CEE FYE 2026 Income



CEE FYE 2026 Expenses



Figures above exclude Non Cash items of Depreciation/ Amortization and Unrealized Gains/(Loss)

Save the Dates!

Hearts of Hope Breakfast
Thursday, February 11, 2027

Together for Change Annual Celebration
Friday, April 16, 2027

SafeWalk
October 2027



CEE's Together for Change Annual Celebration Founders Award Presentation

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

Investing & Impact

Just a few of our many supporters caught on camera over the past year...

Partnership Spotlight Creating Possibility for Children

Through a grant-funded partnership, every age-eligible child at our Patricia House shelter attended a week-long summer camp, providing a safe space for fun, learning, and growth while building hope for the future.



John Royce, CEE Ambassador Council member and Hearts of Hope Breakfast host at the Candlewood Inn



Members of the Beylouni Family at our Annual Dinner



Grant award presentation with Ives Bank



Redding Country Club Fashion Show Fundraiser



Celebrity Bartending Third-Party Fundraiser at The Reserve

Our Community Showing Up

Third-party events turn community support into action, raising awareness and critical funds for CEE's mission. Thank you to our 2026 event organizers.

On average 50% of our budget is self-raised, and every gift from our donors fuels hope, healing, and safety for survivors.

The Center
for Empowerment and Education

Creating safer communities free from violence

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

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

thecenter@TheCenterCT.org

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Danbury, CT 06810