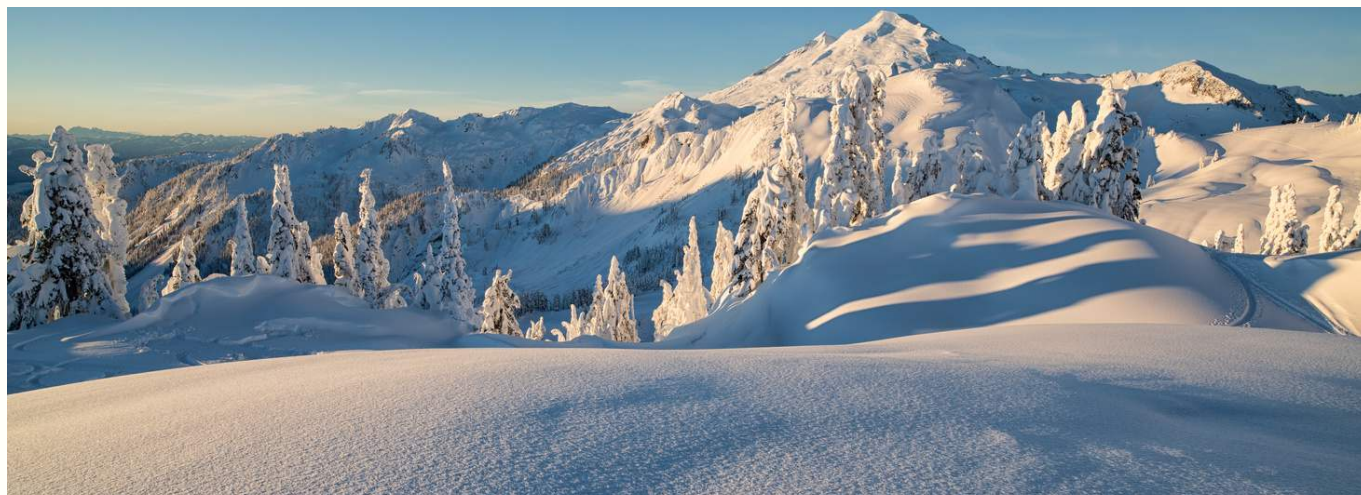


# The Dove



Domestic Violence Services of Snohomish County Newsletter



## Letter from C.O.O

Happy New Year, Everyone

As I reflect on the past year, I can't help but think "Wow, what an amazing year 2024 has been!" It's been full of learning, growth, excitement, anticipation, and, as always a sprinkle of magic. This year, we've seen the strength of our teamwork and community, the importance of staying true to ourselves and our values, and how the little things—like kindness, empathy, and determination—truly make a big impact.

I want to take a moment to celebrate our amazing departments. Each team has gone above and beyond to provide exceptional service. Whether it's our Confidential Shelter offering advocacy, essential items, and a safe room, Supportive Housing providing resources and ongoing housing assistance, or Legal Advocacy helping with court support and protection orders, everyone's hard work has made a significant impact within our community. I'm also excited about our Prevention and Outreach efforts, where we've been busy with presentations and training, as well as our Fundraising and Development that connects us with our amazing donors and organizes fun events.

As we welcome the New Year, let us view it as a wonderful opportunity for our dreams to take shape and our combined efforts to lead to fantastic outcomes. I am sending you all my warmest wishes for a year filled with peace, joy, and prosperity. Let's strive to make 2025 a year that exceeds our expectations. This is a great moment for a fresh start, allowing us to begin a new chapter in our personal and shared journeys. Cheers to a bright and promising year ahead!

-Becky Megard, Chief Operating Officer

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## “Why Doesn’t She Leave?”

The first question Advocates and Staff at DV Agencies like DVS must become comfortable answering is “Why did they stay?” This is asked by well-meaning community members at public education events; by family members calling into the support line to ask how to help their loved ones; by abusers who believe that their victim staying absolves them of the responsibility for their abusive behavior. It’s a question spoken by the children of survivors during their stay in an emergency shelter, and by the survivors themselves as they process their past and present journeys. It’s a question that stems from understanding and blame, from judgment, from love, from fear and ignorance. It’s an important question, as it highlights how little we understand of the lives of survivors—and it gives us the guidance we need to be empathetic and curious about the reality of abuse. Though it’s a good question, however, it often becomes a barrier itself to a survivor’s path to help and resources. And it is a very complicated question to answer.

The idea of freedom of movement is paramount to the American way of life. We are free to cross state borders without ID checks, to apply for positions in cities 2,000 miles away. The pandemic opened up the potential of remote work in a new and often wonderful way. We have buses and trains and airplanes traveling from coast to coast, offering hundreds of options per day. But as anyone who has ever lived paycheck to paycheck can tell you, however, movement is not easy when money must be spent first on outrageous rents and outrageously priced eggs. The ability to move freely is greatly restricted by your available funds, and when 99% of DV cases have a form of financial abuse involved the barriers facing survivors of Intimate Partner Violence are even more daunting.<sup>1</sup>

The financial burden of fleeing their abuser is just one barrier to safety for survivors to navigate. When asked, Advocates at DVS identified children and pets as two top reasons clients didn’t leave their abuser sooner. Sometimes clients stay for the safety of their children and pets, as threats to harm either is a common tool for an abuser in maintaining control in their relationship.

Other times, clients will stay in order to ensure that their children don’t lose a parent or parental figure—due to cultural pressures, their own family history, or a belief in their partner’s parenting skills.

We often find that this choice is difficult for many people without a history of DV to emphasize with, but when you consider the cycle of abuse, it begins to make more sense. In order to keep tensions low, and avoid an incident, survivors often spend years sacrificing their own safety, security, and health in order to ensure food and shelter for their family, prioritizing their children over themselves. In these cases, when sacrifice is a daily occurrence, it is not surprising to see a survivor make this choice again and again.

Other top answers identified by DVS staff include: family pressure, cultural norms and backlash, language barriers to any support system, and, unfortunately, lack of knowledge of resources within the community. With all of these factors in the way, the idea of “simply leaving” can seem impossible, and planning an exit can take some time. And these are just some of the top reasons that have been shared with our staff in the last couple months.

Every person’s life is difficult and complex, regardless of the relationships with those around them. Choices that may seem obvious to an outsider, without the intimate knowledge of a survivor’s child care routine, school choices, emotional connection and bonding, isolation and fear, quickly become muddled as we consider the limitations of options that actually exist. Should a survivor be expected to sleep outside with their children in January to escape their abuser? Should they leave their beloved pet behind to potential harm in order to move into a confidential shelter? Should they risk taking a broken down car over Snoqualmie pass to get to family in Spokane? These decisions, decisions made every day by people who deserve to be loved and treated well, by survivors who are suffering due to the actions of another, are hard decisions in a vacuum. Outside of a vacuum, in the mess of real life, these decisions can be paralyzing.

In the face of that difficulty, we ask that those of us in the lives of survivors keep ourselves as free of judgement as possible, do what we can to ensure that resources are available, and offer support to those we love, regardless of the choices they make and how it appears from our limited vantage point. Instead of “why did they stay?”, we can ask, “how do we make it easier to leave?”

<sup>1</sup> <https://nnedv.org/content/about-financial-abuse/>

## Out and About:



1/20/25 – MLK Jr. Day Resource Fair @ Carl Gipson, 11-2  
 1/23/25 - Point in Time Counts HASCO Resource Fair @ HASCO, 10-3  
 TTNS Resource Fair @ TTNS Monroe HUB, 12-5  
 2/22/25 – City of Snohomish Resource Fair @ Snohomish Carnegie Resource Center, 12-4  
 3/1/25 – You Are Not Alone Conference @ Rosehill Community Center 10-2

Drop-Ins:

**Mukilteo Library** – every Monday 2:30-4:30

**Edmonds Library** – Second Wednesday of the month, 3:30-4:30; February 12th, March 12th, April 9th

**Snohomish Library** – Fourth Wednesday of the month, 1-3pm; February 24th, March 24th, April 23rd  
**Brier Library** – Second Wednesday of the month, 1:30-3; February 12th, March 12th, April 9th

**Mountlake Terrace Library** – First Wednesday of the month, 3-4pm; February 5th, March 5th, April 2nd

**Sultan Library** – First Monday of the month 2:30-4:30; March 3rd, April 7th  
**Carnegie Resource Center** – Second & Fourth Mondays, 11-2pm; February 10th, February 24th, March 10th, March 24th, April 14th, April 28th

**Everett Recovery Café** – First Monday of the month, 12:30-1:30; February 3rd, March 3rd, April 7th

## Domestic Violence Services

Domestic Violence Services of Snohomish County (DVS) is a private, non-profit organization serving Snohomish County since 1976. We are the only program in Snohomish County providing emergency shelter and comprehensive, confidential services to victims of domestic abuse without regard to age, gender, race, religion, culture, national origin, sexual orientation or income level. DVS provides individual and community awareness programs which can affect the social change necessary to eliminate domestic violence throughout Snohomish County.

# Department Highlight: Prevention, Education and Outreach

Prevention, Education, and Outreach: our department title clearly illustrates the three tenants of the work its members do. Each aspect is equally important to our mission to support our community in having safe, healthy relationships. Let's break down each portion of this triad to get a better understanding of what work has been done in the community, and what the department is actively working towards.

*Prevention: Teaching youth in our community the skills to have healthy relationships.*

In the past, as the department identified the needs of our community and focused on providing services, we focused more on education and outreach. As we continued to grow, we turned our focus toward prevention methods, in addition to the responsive services already offered. This began with the development of our 8 week curriculum, which covered the primary subjects we discuss in other aspects of our work: healthy, toxic, and abusive relationships; red and green flags; boundaries and communication; ending relationships and friendships; consent and coercion; online safety and social media; and bystander intervention. This was offered infrequently, and primarily to after school programs, such as the YMCA.

Over the last 4 years, the department has expanded our prevention efforts to adapt the original 8 week curriculum to be used in school settings. This past spring, we worked with Marysville Getchell High School to provide a series of discussion groups, using activities and interactive lessons to engage students. This found great success, and led to an expansion to multiple other schools in Marysville for the 2024-2025 school year. In the future, we aim for a peer education program in which students facilitate healthy relationship curriculum in their school communities. The goal of this program is to encourage youth to take the lead on teaching one another healthy relationship skills with our support, as this approach allows for more sustainable and impactful change. As our department begins to focus primarily on prevention efforts, the "education" portion of our work is also evolving.

*Education: Educating community members of all ages about abusive relationships, how to identify them, and how to talk about abuse.*

In the beginning of our department's existence, our education work was focused more specifically on domestic violence. When working with youth, the department discussed abusive relationships through an anecdotal lens, and many discussion topics were focused on safety in relationships. As with many organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed significant change in the department, and served as a hard reset for our approach to educating our community. With new leadership and team members, as well as a very different community landscape, our opportunities to work with schools were limited. The team revamped the curriculum to be a combination of both domestic violence awareness and healthy relationship skill building. We worked with community partners to provide webinars, presentations, and workshops on a wide range of topics.

In the 2021-2022 school year, we began working with more schools to facilitate the healthy relationships portion of their health class' sex education curriculum. Each year, we see increased requests for this partnership, expanding the number of students reached with our presentations.

Between the 2023-2024 school year and the 2024-2025 school year, we have doubled the number of presentations we are offering. One contributing factor to this is the increase in invitations to present to social emotional learning classes in addition to health classes. This new opportunity allowed us to evolve our curriculum to include a wider variety of topics that teach youth how to have healthier friendships and relationships, and work through the inevitable tough moments that may occur in their relationships. This has included a refinement of our "bystander intervention" unit and the development of our "responding to big emotions" unit.

As the capacity of the department becomes more limited with this increased demand, we've been consolidating our prevention and education approaches. The line between these two elements of our department has become blurred in our youth engagement, as the curriculum is delivered in ways that are unique to the needs of each school community. However, our department ensures education is still a unique tenant of our work in the larger community. In the last few years, we worked with a number of community organizations to provide education on domestic violence and working with survivors. This has allowed DVS to establish stronger relationships with other organizations and clear up confusion about the work we do.

*Outreach: Informing our community on what services Domestic Violence Services of Snohomish County offer and how we work with survivors.*

Another way in which we inform the community of the work our organization does is through our outreach efforts. Particularly in the wake of the pandemic, it was difficult for the department to find spaces to engage with the community through the aforementioned methods. During this time, we leaned heavily on our outreach efforts to establish our presence. This meant attending as many events throughout the county as we were able to, and being consistent in our participation with community coalitions and groups. Over time, this built trust and recognition for our organization and team, and allowed for the opportunities to work with community organizations and schools.

As those opportunities have become the primary focus of our work, our outreach efforts have shifted. We have begun to focus on being regularly present in spaces such as libraries and resource centers to continue building recognition of our agency throughout Snohomish County, and increase accessibility of our resources. Our community is large and far reaching, and it can be difficult to create awareness for DVS in some portions, such as our rural areas. Consistently setting up tables in those areas in particular has allowed us to interact with community members that are in need of our services, or have questions about our organization. While the work the department is doing evolves, we aim to maintain our presence throughout the community through outreach, as this portion of our work is vital to supporting the work our agency does.

The Prevention, Education, and Outreach Department has experienced a number of changes in the work we have done in Snohomish County since its conception. While we work to find the optimal ways to aid our youth in having healthy relationships and our community in supporting survivors, the department has been steadfast in its contributions towards DVS' mission: addressing and ending intimate partner violence in our community.

If you are concerned about a loved one, or do not feel safe in your own relationship, please call our free, 24 hour support line at

425-25-ABUSE

425-252-2873

**Domestic Violence Services of Snohomish County**

**Presents**

**33rd Annual  
Chocolate & Wine Lovers Gala**

**CANDY LAND**

**HOW SWEET IT IS**

**FRIDAY**

**APRIL 4, 2025**

**Tulalip Resort Casino**

**Register by February**

**14th for**

**Early Bird Pricing**

**\$125/ Person**

**\$875 / Table of 8**



**Scan to RSVP**



**Domestic Violence Services  
of Snohomish County**