

# BOTTOMLINE

ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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## A CORPORATE VOICE

### The Allstate Foundation's Helping Hands: Providing education and resources to survivors and victims of domestic violence

LARGO, Fla. – As the Field Senior Vice President for Allstate Florida, I have the privilege and honor to lead about 4,000 people – the majority of whom are women. Approximately one in every four women and one in seven men are victims of domestic violence; we can estimate that well over 1,000 of those people have been victims, will be victims, or could be victims of this horrible epidemic.

Nearly everybody knows someone who's been in an abusive relationship, a constant reminder that domestic violence is still a massive problem. While I have not been a victim myself, nor has a close relative, I have heard stories from others in my life about how some of their friends and moms were abused. I didn't fully understand the impact of domestic violence as a young man and today I wrestle with the failure of not being more knowledgeable about signs of abusive behavior. It was not long ago that I reached out to an

employee who repeatedly came to work with signs of domestic violence, suggesting that she call the police. At that time, I debated taking more concrete actions, but did not know what to do. Thankfully, in her case, the abuse ended. In hindsight, I wish I had been more aware of the many resources available for victims of domestic violence. Through education and working with the FCADV, I am better prepared now to advise those in danger and be an agent for safety.

I believe education is key to stemming the high rate of domestic violence in society. We should begin by educating ourselves on what constitutes domestic violence, learning to identify its varying forms. Education about how

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*Mike Sheely*

widespread domestic violence is and the barriers that keep victims in harm's way, and the options and programs available to victims in order to help escape violence and work towards a safe and secure life should be widely available. These aspects of domestic violence should be taught in homes by parents, and in schools and communities by professionals so that everyone understands the challenges and knows how to properly respond when confronted with signs of domestic violence.

I joined the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Foundation Board of Directors to play a bigger role in making a difference for victims of domestic violence in the state.

## Fast Facts About Domestic Violence

- Victims of intimate partner violence lose a total of 8 million days of paid work each year.
- The cost of intimate partner violence exceeds \$8.3 billion per year.
- Between 21-60% of victims of intimate partner violence lose their jobs due to reasons stemming from the abuse.
- Between 2003 and 2008, 142 women were murdered in their workplace by their abuser, 78% of women were killed in the workplace during this timeframe.
- A 2005 national telephone survey by the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence found that 21% of full-time employed adults were victims of domestic violence and 64% of them indicated their work performance was significantly impacted.
- A study released by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in October 2005 found that health care costs associated with each incident of domestic violence were \$948 in cases where women were the victims and \$387 in cases where men were the victims. The study also found that domestic violence against women results in more emergency room visits and inpatient hospitalizations, including greater use of physician services than domestic violence where men are the victims.

A joint push for education around the importance of economic empowerment and financial independence from FCADV and The Allstate Foundation during the 2015 National Financial Literacy Month received governmental support from Attorney General Pam Bondi, Senator Denise Grimsely and my fellow Board member, Representative Dana Young. Through programs such as Changing Lives: A Partnership Between Florida Allstate Agents and Domestic Violence Centers and the Purple Purse Moving Ahead Through Financial Management curriculum—funded

by a \$100,000 contribution from The Allstate Foundation to support financial literacy programs – FCADV and The Allstate Foundation have paired volunteer Allstate agents with domestic violence centers in a meaningful, productive way at the local level. Those partnerships are bearing fruit this month, as dozens of Allstate agents are hosting Purple Purse Holiday Drives in their offices. Items from toiletries and makeup to cooking ware and office supplies can help take a small, but not insignificant burden off of survivors. Allstate's Regional office, located in Largo, held a fundraising drive

this April to benefit Community Action Stops Abuse (CASA). My colleagues helped to raise nearly \$5,000 for CASA, the domestic violence center of southern Pinellas County. These local campaigns in Florida are being replicated across the country by Allstate agents and employees. Allstate's countrywide are informing their communities about the consequences of domestic violence and sharing useful and professional knowledge to help put an end to this horrible epidemic.

The Allstate Foundation's Purple Purse initiative is well into its 12th year. Purple Purse annually helps raise millions of dollars for survivors in the United States through the Purple Purse Challenge during October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The Purple Purse Challenge brings together hundreds of non-profits in a friendly competition to raise the most money for shelters and awareness in their communities. Since 2014, more than \$5.5 million was raised for domestic violence programs. In 2017 alone, the Purple Purse Challenge has surpassed \$3.4 million in donations. I can only assume that more educational programs, and more and louder voices against domestic violence have led to this spike in donations. Whatever the case, Purple Purse is a nation-leading advocacy program for supporting victims of domestic violence, and I am proud to work for an organization that supports programs that promote and advocate for its

## Financial Tips for Survivors

Six tips for domestic violence victims and survivors that are seeking to secure their financial future:

- Plan for your safety by contacting your local domestic violence program to discuss your options and learn about the community resources you can access for support (i.e., emergency assistance funds, shelter, utility and/or rent assistance, public benefits and affordable housing).
- Obtain a copy of your credit report and monitor your credit regularly. Most financial institutions provide credit monitoring services such as Privacy Guard at a low cost. You can get a copy of your credit report by contacting one of the three credit bureaus: Equifax (1-800-685-1111), Experian (1-866-966-1067) or TransUnion (1-877-680-7275), or from FREE Annual Credit Report (1-877-322-8228).
- Change all ATM and debit card PIN codes, online banking passwords and online investing passwords. Also be sure to change the password on your email account(s).

- Open a post office box for mail and any financial information you may receive before you leave or immediately after you leave an abusive situation. You can obtain a post office box from the United States Postal Service or vendors such as Parcel Plus, Mail Boxes Etc. or The UPS Store.
- Call your utility companies, wireless telephone service and financial institutions to secure your private financial information with special PIN codes and passwords. Be sure to do the same on all new credit, wireless and/or utility accounts. Ask these companies to use identifiers other than your Social Security Number, date of birth or mother's maiden name to authenticate your identity.
- Be sure to make necessary changes to your insurance plans, will or trust beneficiaries to appoint a new person if your partner is your current designee. For more information check out Nerdwallet <http://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/advice/finance-tips/domestic-violence/>

Information from: The National Network to End Domestic Violence, available at: <https://nnedv.org/content/financial-tips-for-survivors/>

employees' and consumers' safety. Too many people think a business' contribution to society is to provide jobs and generate commerce. At Allstate, our purpose and contribution is much greater, and we believe that companies like ours that work to build communities and improve the lives of others while generating jobs and revenue will have the brightest future. We are committed to creating a sense of pride among our employees and empowering our employees to be advocates against domestic violence and participation in the Allstate Foundation's Purple Purse initiative is an important part of what we do. Allstate not only

puts a lot of energy and money into ending domestic violence through the Allstate Foundation, but also allows its employees to actively participate in the causes that matter most to us.

Financial dependency is the primary reason why victims of domestic violence remain in abusive relationships. It is a terrifying statistic that financial abuse can cause nearly as much anguish and pain as the physical harm or emotional assault of domestic violence. Victims that suffer from financial abuse are kept from acquiring or spending money, from maintaining a job and even from accessing reliable transportation. That

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isolation may force a victim into a seemingly inescapable feeling of dependency, one based out of fear. Instead of getting out and getting help, victims may wonder, "What will happen if I fail to escape?" or, "What will he/she do if I try?" This is where The Allstate Foundation's resources truly make a difference: working in conjunction with the National Network to End Domestic Violence to produce resources and tools to help individuals better understand and manage finances, The Allstate Foundation has helped more than 1 million victims on the path to safety and security and Allstate's agents in the field that have partnered with domestic violence shelters can be the friendly, knowledgeable faces they need.

Domestic violence awareness is not just a priority in the month of October. Awareness means being at the ready, able to recognize an abusive situation

in any form and willing to step in at its earliest signs. It is as necessary to be on the lookout for our fellow men and women as it is for our own selves. If it is not you who is involved an abusive relationship, it could very well be someone sitting in the same office as you; in the same coffee shop; in the same gym.

My door is always open to those in need. For those unable to reach me, however, there are numerous domestic violence centers from the panhandle down to the tip of the Florida peninsula that can provide support, shelter and educational materials to anyone who needs them. No one should feel trapped, alone, or unable to make a change. We are here to lend a helping hand and help end domestic violence.

The Florida Domestic Violence Hotline is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week at 1-800-500-1119 and is staffed with trained advocates available to assist domestic violence survivors, their family and friends, as well as community partners. Hotline advocates provide support, advocacy, outreach and information and referral services.

FCADV serves as the professional association for Florida's 42 certified domestic violence centers and is the primary representative of survivors and their children in the public policy arena. The Coalition works to end violence by providing leadership, advocacy, education, training, technical assistance, public policy development, public awareness and support to certified domestic violence centers in Florida.

Sponsored by FCADV and the State of Florida, Department of Children and Families.

## Florida's Certified Domestic Violence Centers

Abuse Counseling and Treatment, Inc.  
 Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse, Inc.  
 Another Way, Inc.  
 CASA-Community Action Stops Abuse  
 Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies, Inc.  
 Citrus County Abuse Shelter Association  
 Dawn Center of Hernando County  
 Domestic Abuse Council, Inc.  
 Domestic Abuse Shelter, Inc.

Family Life Center  
 Favor House of Northwest Florida, Inc.  
 Harbor House, Inc.  
 Haven of Lake and Sumter Counties, Inc.  
 Help Now of Osceola County, Inc.  
 Hope Family Services, Inc.  
 Hubbard House, Inc.  
 Lee Conlee House  
 Martha's House, Inc.  
 Miami-Dade Advocates for Victims  
 Micah's Place

Ocala Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Center  
 Peace River Domestic Violence Center  
 Peaceful Paths  
 Quigley House, Inc.  
 Refuge House, Inc.  
 Safehouse of Seminole County  
 Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center  
 SafeSpace, Inc.  
 Safety Shelter of St. John's County (Betty Griffin House)

Salvation Army Brevard County Domestic Violence Program  
 Salvation Army Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Program of Panama City  
 Salvation Army Domestic Violence Program of West Pasco County  
 Serene Harbor, Inc.  
 Shelter for Abused Women & Children, Inc.  
 Shelter House, Inc.  
 Sunrise of Pasco County, Inc.

The Haven of R.C.S.  
 The Spring of Tampa Bay, Inc.  
 Victim Response, Inc. (The Lodge)  
 Vivid Visions  
 Women in Distress of Broward County  
 YWCA of Palm Beach County (Harmony House Program)



# Remember: Help Is Here!



**FCADV**  
 Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Florida Domestic Violence Hotline • 1-800-500-1119 • 24 hours a day/7 days a week**