

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF
SANCTUARY – AN INTIMATE PARTNER/INTER-PERSONAL VIOLENCE (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) RESPONSE TEAM INITIATIVE
AN OUTREACH PROGRAM OF THE ESSEX COUNTY PROSECUTOR’S OFFICE OF VICTIM-WITNESS ADVOCACY

The Essex County Prosecutor’s Office of Victim-Witness Advocacy, founded in 1982, is a prosecutor-based organization working exclusively on behalf of victims of crime. The office is guided by four principals: to serve as an advocate in support of crime victims’ rights and services in Essex County and throughout the state; to provide direct services to those criminally victimized in Essex County; to remain progressive and abreast of current trends in the field of victimology and victim service; and to inform the community of its rights and the remedies available to each of its members resulting from criminal victimization.

Like individuals, whole communities can experience trauma after a disaster or an especially gruesome crime such as the sexual assault and/or abuse of a child, a domestic violence-related, assault, or homicide. The community collectively can feel the devastating impact of this criminal activity, as evidenced by feelings of increased vulnerability and fear for our own safety. Bottom line: the loss of personal freedom and peace of mind is too high a price to pay for criminal lawlessness. Crime and our swift reaction to it as well as assisting its victim-survivors should be of paramount concern for all who live and work in the area.

After a criminal act, many victim-survivors find themselves in a state of confusion and frustration. For those who find themselves involved in the criminal justice process, many have limited information about the facts surrounding the event. Some may lack the resources to adequately address their financial, mental health and social service needs while others may live in proximity to the person (or persons) responsible for the criminal act. In sum, the challenges mentioned above and many others that present soon after the crime should be minimized to whatever extent possible by criminal justice representatives and their allied partners. Additionally, members of helping organizations, though wanting to assist in a crisis, can find themselves affected by a sense of shock, disorientation, and disbelief. They may also be unsure of what to do since few are trained in using their helping skills in catastrophic situations. Organizing a plan of action may be difficult in the confusion of the moment.

With the above in mind, “**Sanctuary**” is a 100-hour program designed to equip community residents to provide crisis intervention and outreach services to survivors of domestic violence. The training is presented in two formats: **BASIC** and **ADVANCED**. The **BASIC FORMAT (approximately 80 hours)** includes presentations and interactive exercises on such topics as the nature of catastrophe, assisting underserved victim populations (part I), crisis intervention and crisis counseling, the spiritual dimension of trauma, cultural aspects of criminal victimization, crime victim/legal advocacy, effective communication skills and supportive services, safety planning and threat assessment (part I), ethics and professionalism, value clarification, the effects of trauma on an individual’s developmental stages, the intersection of substance abuse, mental health, and victimization, trauma assessment, local area resources and networks, and the criminal and family court processes. The **ADVANCED FORMAT (approximately 20 hours)** includes topics covering current responses and emerging trends in crime victim advocacy, trauma informed care, healing centered engagement, trauma bonding, captivity theory, and the science of attraction, the politics of power in intimate relationships, ritualistic abuse, primary aggressor, the topology of battering behavior, social aggression and the bystander intervention, the use of technology as a means to stalk and terrorize, intimate/interpersonal partner violence-related workplace violence, working with the media, assisting underserved victim populations (part II), safety planning and threat assessment (part II) and vicarious trauma, spirituality and self-care.

Upon successful completion of the training program, participating organizations will have a cadre of volunteers that can provide immediate culturally and spiritually sensitive outreach to domestic violence victims and their families within a 24-72-hour period. Office staff will remain available to provide technical support and direction as needed.

For more information on the Essex County Prosecutors Office of Victim-Witness Advocacy’s Sanctuary outreach initiative or to request our services, which are **free of charge**, please call Victim-Witness Coordinator Pamela McCauley at 973-621-4689 during normal business hours.

