

# APRIL NEWSLETTER



## *Family Court and Domestic Violence*

"I feel hopeless" is a phrase I hear all too often from survivors who are going through a custody battle with their abuser. In Wisconsin, family law is an arena where victims of domestic abuse are constantly having to defend themselves and their children from an abuser, often pro se (without an attorney representing them) due to limited income or economic abuse. Family law attorneys quite often misinterpret "family violence" as a two-way street; they believe that the abuser and the victim are co-combative or mutual aggressors. They even blame victims for attempting to protect their children and claim that victims are "alienating" the children from the abuser. Most of us understand that this is not alienation but rather a consequence of an abuser's actions meant to protect the most vulnerable members of our families and our community.

When a parent commits domestic abuse, the law in Wisconsin demands several statutory "protections" as well as presumptions and paramount concerns that lawyers are supposed to acknowledge, and the Court is supposed to apply to the case. Failure to accurately evaluate the dynamics of the family create a power dynamic where the victim ends up having to fight not only the abuser, but the abuser's attorney and even in some cases the guardian ad litem (court appointed attorney for the child/ren). This is a rare instance when the law in Wisconsin is not to blame for victims not receiving protection; instead, it is the practitioners of the law who either fail to apply the applicable laws or outright ignore them when deciding what level of access an abuser should have to either the victim or their children.

So, if you are the victim of domestic abuse and are in a custody dispute in Wisconsin, there are some laws that you might want to know. If you relate to the feeling of hopelessness that so many other survivors face when thrown into family court with your abuser, please reach out for assistance. Our agency has dedicated advocates to assist you. You can also apply for legal aid available to people unable to pay for an attorney at [www.judicare.org](http://www.judicare.org).

## *Sexual Assault Awareness Month*

Teal River Lights in  celebration of Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April 20th

Discussion on why your voice matters; location Black River Falls Public Library

 Follow us on Facebook for the 30 day SAAM Challenges!

## *Last Month's Statistics*

LAP Data:

Total Calls: 5

High Danger: 5

Not High Danger: 0

\*The Lethality Assessment Protocol, or LAP, is a tool that helps police officers and other crisis responders to put victims in contact with us almost immediately after a domestic violence incident. Officers or responders use the lethality assessment to determine how much danger the victim is in in their current situation. If they conclude that the risk of lethality is high, the responder will call us and an advocate will speak with the victim, inform them of our services, and set up a time to call back for a more in-depth conversation.

## *We are here for you*

- 24/7 Crisis Line 855-526-5866
- SANE exam accompaniment
- Peer Support Group
- Children's Support Group

Questions? Call us 715-834-9578

