

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OUTREACH

AWARENESS - SERVICES - PREVENTION



Good News About the Fight to End Domestic Violence

Winter 2026



## ANNUAL BENEFIT GALA

AND

Father Chuck Dahm's 89<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration

Sunday, March 22, 2026 | 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM



Elm West  
681 W. North Avenue, Elmhurst Illinois

\$90/Individual | \$800/Table of 10



Tickets at [bit.ly/DVOGala26](https://bit.ly/DVOGala26)

Join us for brunch, a mimosa bar, inspiring speakers, and our traditional Happy Birthday sing-a-long! Purchase tickets online or return the enclosed envelope with payment. We hope to see you there.

### Win Father Chuck's Favorite Things!

Enter our sweepstakes— no purchase necessary. Return the enclosed envelope, enter at [bit.ly/DVOGala26](https://bit.ly/DVOGala26), at the gala, or email [info@domesticviolenceoutreach.org](mailto:info@domesticviolenceoutreach.org).



## Letter from our New Executive Director

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I am deeply honored to serve as the Executive Director of Domestic Violence Outreach—an organization born from the courage to name what is broken and the determination to change it.

I came to DVO with deep respect for the work being done across the Chicagoland area to raise awareness, promote prevention, and support survivors of domestic violence. What I have quickly learned, however, is that the impact of DVO extends far beyond what is visible on the surface. As I settle into this role, I continue to be struck by the depth of commitment and advocacy taking place quietly behind the scenes.

I am profoundly grateful to Father Charles Dahm, the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, and the dedicated staff for the warm welcome and generous support they have extended to me. The foundation built here is both impressive and humbling. Father Charles will continue as President of the Board and remain deeply engaged in the life and work of DVO—leading, advocating, and serving as the heart and face of this organization. My role is not to replace that leadership, but to strengthen the organizational systems that allow this work to grow and enable Father Charles to focus fully on reaching those who need it most. I recognize the responsibility of this role and am excited to contribute my experience in service of this mission.



In many ways, this work feels like a natural continuation of my life's path. I have spent my career advocating for women and girls, supporting violence-prevention efforts, and working alongside communities that are too often overlooked. I have had the privilege of leading nonprofit organizations in Chicago, including serving as an executive director for over a decade, where I focused on building programs that strengthened and empowered mothers and families. My work has also taken me internationally—collaborating with leaders in the women's movement in South Africa and learning firsthand the power of grassroots organizing and community-driven advocacy. As a researcher and writer, I have spent more than two decades examining violence against women, particularly along the U.S.-Mexico border, to help shift the narrative away from victim-blaming and toward a clearer understanding of these realities.

As I look ahead, I am both realistic and hopeful. This work is not without challenges, and I am committed to moving forward with purpose and resolve. I believe strongly in DVO's ability to expand its reach across Illinois—particularly through prevention efforts in middle schools and interfaith youth groups. Strengthening our funding and partnerships will be essential to this growth, allowing us to serve more communities and deepen our impact.

DVO's work has always been made possible by the generosity and trust of its supporters. This organization is your legacy. Because of you, DVO continues to educate, advocate, and stand alongside those affected by domestic violence. I am committed to honoring that legacy with integrity, care, and urgency, and to stewarding this mission with the same dedication that has brought it this far.

Thank you for welcoming me into this work. I look forward to what we will accomplish together.

Sincerely,  
Shannon Medic Young  
Executive Director

# Domestic Violence Outreach 2025 Impact Report



In 2025, Domestic Violence Outreach (DVO) continued to grow by expanding programs and strengthening trust within communities. DVO's work is grounded in three pillars: awareness, service, and prevention.

Through our Dating Matters initiative, DVO now works in 15 middle schools, serving 1,250 students. DVO is the only organization focused specifically on prevention education for middle school students, a critical stage to learn about relationships, boundaries, and respect. Each year, a new cohort enters the program in 6th grade, while DVO continues with students through 7th and 8th grades.

DVO continues to build partnerships within faith communities. In 2025, DVO expanded its DV groups to more than 69 parishes where it works with mentors to deliver education, outreach, and support. Too often, domestic violence is not openly discussed in schools or churches, which can leave those experiencing harm unsure whether they will be believed or supported. By clearly denouncing domestic violence, these communities become places where victims know they can seek help without fear or shame.

This year also marked organizational growth, including three in-person and two online fundraisers, the hiring of a new Executive Director, and achieving tax exempt 501(c)(3) status, strengthening DVO's ability to expand and sustain its mission.

In 2026, DVO plans to expand Dating Matters in Chicago Public Schools and across Illinois, strengthen and expand the network of parish groups, and begin building an interfaith coalition working to assure safety, dignity, and trust in every community.

*If you believe DVO may be a good fit in your school, place of worship, or community, we would love to hear from you.*



**Connect with us!**



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[www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org](http://www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org)

## Karina's Law and Budget Increases Bring Hope

Karina's Law was passed by the Illinois General Assembly in January 2025, signed into law by Governor Pritzker in February 2025, and became effective on May 11, 2025. Many of you worked for its passage.

Karina's Law seeks to protect survivors of gender-based violence by enabling courts and law enforcement to actively remove firearms as part of orders of protection. Karina's Law is named in honor of Karina Gonzalez, who, along with her daughter, was fatally shot by her husband. In the first six months of the law, Cook County granted more than 50 search warrants for firearms removal as part of orders of protection.



Great news: The City of Chicago increased funding for gender-based violence (GBV) services to \$22.7 million in 2026, the largest investment by the City in GBV services in history. A great achievement in a difficult budget season. The Cook County Board added \$4.56 million for services, financial assistance for survivors, and staff support. Thanks to all who made this happen.



# DVO Travels to Europe For ODIHR Conference



In early December, Fr. Chuck Dahm, O.P., DVO Director, attended a conference in Warsaw, Poland, organized by the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), an arm of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

The conference focused on how religious faiths can help reduce violence against women and girls. It provided DVO an opportunity to exchange experiences, build partnerships, and contribute to more coordinated responses. It also marked the launch of ODIHR's guide for states to engage religious actors in eliminating violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Approximately 50 people attended, primarily from Europe and Asia. Many different faiths participated, but Christian, Muslim, and Jewish representatives were predominant. Many participants were from national and international agencies where they taught and/or advocated around VAWG. The two U.S. representatives were Fr. Chuck and Deborah Rosenbloom, Chief Program Officer of Jewish Women International in Washington, D.C. Fr. Chuck was the only Catholic priest in attendance.

Fr. Chuck's presentation was well received. Participants were interested in DVO's work and model, and, of course, its website. Many were surprised DVO preaches in the pulpit. Little attention was given to several important areas, including:

- Helping youth understand healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Teaching in seminaries.
- Responding to men who cause harm.



The entire recap can be found on our website at [www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org/in-the-news.html](http://www.domesticviolenceoutreach.org/in-the-news.html)

## Domestic Violence Outreach Executive Committee

Shannon Medic Young, Executive Director, [shannon@domesticviolenceoutreach.org](mailto:shannon@domesticviolenceoutreach.org)

Father Charles Dahm, O.P., Chairman of the Board  
John Monaco, COO/Education  
Jan Burdulis, Administration  
Pam Davis  
Deb Panos  
Annie Ryder, Social Media/Newsletter  
David Bearden

Valerie Yokie, St. Raymond's  
Molly Williams  
Diane O'Brien, Parish Support  
Deborah Hammond  
Bernita Johnson, St. Katharine Drexel  
Maureen Farrell, Public Policy

[info@domesticviolenceoutreach.org](mailto:info@domesticviolenceoutreach.org)

## Thank You for Your Generous Support

Thank you for your generosity. We invite you to consider deepening your support for Domestic Violence Outreach (DVO). You may give by mail, through our website, via stock transfer or a rollover IRA, or by including DVO in your will or living trust. Securing DVO's future is critical for future generations. For more information or donation forms, visit DVO's website or contact Naomi Gutierrez at [naomi@domesticviolenceoutreach.org](mailto:naomi@domesticviolenceoutreach.org). Donations may also be mailed to Fr. Charles W. Dahm, O.P., 1914 S. Ashland Avenue, Chicago, IL 60608, or made by phone at 312-371-7752.