|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| F R  O M | Name &  Title | Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner | Health Department | BCHDseal |
| Agency  Name &  Address | Health Department  1001 E. Fayette Street  Baltimore, Maryland 21201 | AGENCY REPORT |
| Subject/  Position: | 21-0041R – Informational Hearing – Domestic Violence in Baltimore City  **FAVORABLE** |  |

To: President and Members June 30, 2021

of the City Council

c/o 409 City Hall

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #21-0041R, entitled, “Informational Hearing – Domestic Violence in Baltimore City.” This resolution seeks a discussion regarding “programs available to victims of domestic violence.”

***BCHD Services and Care Coordination***

Screening is a critical tool used by BCHD’s Bureau of Maternal and Child Health (MCH). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2022, many of BCHD’s MCH programs have been using telehealth, which has presented multiple challenges for completing intimate partner violence (IPV) screenings. Across all MCH programs, there has been a decline in the number of completed IPV assessments. Notably, clients appear to feel more at risk during a telehealth visit and program staff are not always 100% certain that a client is able to speak privately. As a result, some programs have established guidelines and helpful resources with details on establishing and maintaining safety. Nevertheless, IPV screening is a major priority for the MCH system in FY22 as programs begin back in person.

BCHD’s first point of universal screening is through HealthCare Access Maryland (HCAM) either after receipt of a prenatal risk assessment or a postpartum infant and maternal referral from a hospital after a baby is delivered. The screening is completed by trained nurses and/or social workers.[[1]](#footnote-1) If screening results are positive, a HCAM outreach staffer starts a conversation around safety and resources. HCAM often refers many pregnant and postpartum women into home visiting (HV) services within MCH. Moreover, clients and patients are often referred to House of Ruth.

Additionally, the Youth Services and Advocacy Project (YSAP) housed within BCHD provides services to primary and secondary victims of violence between ages 11 and 24.[[2]](#footnote-2) Since October of 2020, YSAP has provided services for 119 victims, of which 29 (24 percent) were identified as domestic violence/intimate partner violence victims.

For all victims of crime, a Confidential Intake/Background Assessment Packet is completed which includes the following (*Note: this is not an exhaustive list*):

* Client Information (demographics)
* Housing Stabilization Determination
* Rental Assistance Determination
* Types of Victimization
  + Abuse and Neglect
  + Violent Crime (domestic and family violence
  + Property Crime
  + Human Trafficking
  + Hate Crime
  + Other (i.e, bullying, stalking harassment, identity theft, etc.)
* Medical Health History
* Trauma history
* Substance use
* Mental health diagnosis
* Social and Community Support
* Social Needs
* Service Plan
* Referrals
* Consent
* PTSD Assessment
  + Youth and Adult

YSAP has provided funds toward relocation as well as partnered with agencies that provide job training with daycare that gives guaranteed employment at the end of the training. YSAP supports and service linkages include, but are not limited to, the following fields:

* Mental health services and supports
* Employment opportunities
* Housing assistance
* Transportation assistance
* Educational services
* Trauma-focused peer support groups

Partners providing referrals or services have been provided with a YSAP brochure of services as well as a one-pager providing an overview of the program. YSAP has received referrals from the following municipal agencies and community-based organizations with specific focus on domestic/intimate partner violence:

* State’s Attorney’s Office Victim Services
* House of Ruth
* ConneXions: A Community Based Arts School
* Renaissance Academy
* Keys Development
* Homeless Shelters (Michelle Smalls)
* Baltimore City Health Department - Internal Referrals
* Local Care Teams
* Self-referrals

YSAP has provided outgoing referrals to House of Ruth and the Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center at the University of Maryland for legal support. Additionally, all OYTS staff have been trained by the Governor’s Maryland Safe at Home program on how to make proper referrals. The program protects the identity of domestic violence victims from their abusers and any agency or organization including the courts knowing where the victim resides.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Altogether, BCHD believes domestic/intimate partner violence is a serious public health threat. BCHD welcomes a discussion of its programs and urges a **favorable** report for Council Bill #21-0041R.

1. The questions were recently updated with the AHC project based on CMS recommended questions, including:

   How often does anyone, including family and friends, physically hurt you?

   How often does anyone, including family and friends, insult or talk down to you?

   How often does anyone, including family and friends, threaten you with harm?

   The answer options include: **Never      Rarely      Sometimes      Fairly often      Frequently** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more information and/or support: 410.396.2206 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Maryland Safe at Home, https://sos.maryland.gov/ACP/Pages/default.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-3)