

Everyone Deserves a Chance to be Loved and Respected



Turning Point
of Lehigh Valley

BY DEB LEHMAN

In 1976, a small group known as “May Day Anonymous” came together to answer hotline calls from women who were victims of domestic violence. Two years later, the group became known as **Turning Point of Lehigh Valley, Inc.**

Turning Point of Lehigh Valley provides confidential support and information to help victims of all types of domestic and intimate partner abuse turn their lives around.

“In the early days of our work, we were part of what was often referred to as the ‘battered women’s movement,’” said Andrea Search, Director of Advancement. “The success of those early efforts led to a national awakening of just how broad the problem was, and the term ‘domestic violence’ soon took its place.”

“Words matter,” Search continued. “While physical violence can leave visible wounds, emotional, verbal and psychological aggression can be just as harmful. In 2019, our Board of Directors changed the wording from ‘domestic violence’ to ‘domestic and intimate partner abuse,’ so that all survivors could see themselves in our mission regardless of the type of abuse inflicted, or the living arrangement of the persons involved.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), about one in four women and nearly one in 10 men have experienced contact sexual

violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime and reported some form of intimate partner violence-related impact. Over 43 million women and 38 million men have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner.

Teen dating violence is also common. Data from CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicate that about one in 12 teens experienced physical dating violence and about one in 12 sexual dating violence. Female students experienced higher rates of physical and sexual dating violence than male students. Students who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) experienced higher rates of physical and sexual dating violence compared to students who identified as heterosexual.

As reported by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence’s Annual Fatality Report, 112 victims lost their lives to domestic violence in Pennsylvania in 2021. This number includes 70 females and 42 males. Of the 112 lives lost, 63% were killed with a firearm. The data is compiled by the news, police departments, and information provided by 59 domestic violence programs that service Pennsylvania’s 67 counties.

Studies indicate that domestic and intimate partner abuse is prevalent in our society, but the current data only reveals part of the story. Many people suffer in silence and don’t speak out. There is a need to improve data collection on domestic violence and the people at Turning

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Point are dedicated to raising awareness and helping victims make a new start.

Domestic violence impacts the entire family, often putting educators on the front lines. Search was a teacher for 10 years before coming to Turning Point.

“When people ask children what they want to be when they grow up, the answer is usually a doctor, teacher, police officer, firefighter....not I want to be a domestic abuse advocate,” she said. “There is one common thread that ties together the people who work and volunteer at Turning Point ...and that is passion for our mission. We truly believe in what we do, have compassion for helping others, and the desire to make a difference.”

Here are a few inspiring stories we'd like to share:



“We received a call from a survivor of domestic violence who had used our services but was reaching out to help another victim, a stranger who was involved in an abusive relationship. Our client encouraged the young woman to seek help from Turning Point, which she did, and later called to say she broke up with her controlling boyfriend. “If it wasn’t for your help and encouragement, I would have never had the courage to speak up and help this young woman,” our client said. “Thank you, Turning Point.”



A new employee revealed that the reason she applied for an advocate position at Turning Point was because her mother had been in an abusive relationship for many years. “I want to help other women going through the same thing that my mom went through,” she said. “What better way to do that than by working at Turning Point of Lehigh Valley.”



A young woman in her 20’s who was quarantined with her abusive husband during the Pandemic, called the hotline one night after he had verbally abused her in front of their daughter. She called us for guidance and we provided her with counseling until she finally summoned up the courage to leave her abuser. “For the first time in a long while, I’ve slept easier at night,” she said. “I felt truly alone before calling you, but now I’m hopeful for a new life. It hasn’t been easy, but I have learned after your empowerment counseling sessions that I deserve love and respect.”

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. If you have any questions or need our services, please call our confidential, 24-hour hotline at 610-437-3369.