

Time Line - Significant Events in Maine's Response To Domestic Violence

1964 Haven House, California. First shelter established by Al-Anon women for families of alcoholic abusers.

1973 Spruce Run is incorporated in Bangor, Maine. First domestic violence project in the state. Founding mothers include: Kay Lucas, Lou Chamberland, Susan Dunn Nichols, Linda Monko, Mary McPherson, Constance "Connie" Huntley, Terri Lewis, Sue Bradford, Nancy Gentile, Elaine Tucker, Ann Schonberger, & Karen Marysdaughter

Domestic violence projects spring up all over Maine throughout the seventies: Augusta, Portland, Auburn, Presque Isle, Sanford, Dover-Foxcroft, Machias and Rockland.

1977 The first statewide meeting is held and the Maine Coalition for Family Crisis Services (MCFCS) is established. In 2001, the coalition's name is changed to the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV).

1978

An act to approve funds for emergency shelters for victims of family violence is presented to the Maine Legislature. Governor Longley vetoed the bill; the veto is overridden in the House but sustained in the Senate.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV is incorporated.

Family Crisis Services (then called Family Crisis Shelter) in Portland opens Maine's first shelter for battered women.

Support group forms in Milo, as well as Dover-Foxcroft.

1979

Maine Legislature approves funding for shelters for victims of domestic violence, \$142,500 statewide.

Womancare/Aegis founding group: Severn Towle, Cindy Freeman, Nina Brawn, Wileen Levasseur, Adrian Mangan, Pat Willey, Susan Bennett, Debbie Byron, Carolyn Hersey, Judy Segerson, Isabelle Warren and more. They get training from Spruce Run, Bangor.

1980

Legislature enacts "An ACT Concerning Abuse Between Family or Household Members", creating new criminal and civil remedies for victims of domestic violence, stating that "a law enforcement officer at the scene of an alleged incident of abuse shall use the same standard of enforcing relevant Maine Criminal Code sections when the incident involves family or household members as when it involves strangers".

1981 Maine's Protection from Abuse Order is created in the same legislation.
Womancare/Aegis joins the Maine Coalition for Family Crisis Services (MCFCS).
Womancare/Aegis receives first state contract for \$8,392.
First Womancare Board of Directors forms, Severn Towl named as first director.
Womancare gets first office in Dover-Foxcroft.

1984 HUD (Housing and Urban Development) issues regulations making battered women eligible for special preference in receiving federal housing assistance.

Victims of Crime Act passes in Congress which, among other things, provides (c. \$81,000) federal funds for domestic violence programs.

1985 Legislature approves funding for Maine's domestic violence projects to establish or expand children's programs and community response programs.

Marital rape law passes in Maine; the "spousal exemption" was removed from the sexual assault statutes.

Mid-'80s Nancy Gentile bequeaths \$35,000 to MCFCS to fund a state coalition office.
Maine's legislature approves funding for MCFCS projects to establish or expand children's programs and community response programs.

1986 Harmony Camp/Project Self-Esteem begins for Womancare. Juliana Plummer is named new Womancare director.

1987 Maine's domestic violence programs receive \$45,000 statewide from federal funds authorized under the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA).

Spruce Run's former Community Education Coordinator and former Spruce Run Steering Committee member, Mary Cathcart, is elected to the Maine House of Representatives.

1988 The "Information Guide for Abused Women in Maine" is published by the Maine Division, American Association of University Women and the Maine Coalition for Family Crisis Services.

1989 Legislature approves additional state funds for domestic violence programs to expand outreach activities and other services, bringing the total state funds for these programs to one million dollars.

The Shelter Operating Subsidy Grant program is funded by the legislature through the Maine State Housing Authority, providing funds for all Maine's homeless shelters, including the domestic violence shelters.

- 1990 Maine's Commission on Domestic Abuse is established.
Senator Biden and Cohen introduce the Violence Against Women Act, federal legislation addressing domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Significant cuts are made to the General Assistance and AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) programs in Maine, making it harder for poor women to escape abuse.
- 1991 State law mandates that domestic violence must be taken into account in determining custody and visitation.
- 1993 LD 1407 establishes a "Study Concerning Parental Rights and Responsibilities in Cases of Domestic Abuse" to make recommendations regarding custody, visitation, batterers' intervention programs and related topics to the 115th legislature.
- 1993 Maine's stalking law is passed, adding language to the protection from abuse and criminal harassment statutes to include stalking behavior.
- The Next Step becomes the tenth member project of the Maine Coalition for Family Crisis Services.

- 1994 The federal Violence Against Women Act, introduced in 1990, by Senators Biden and Cohen, is combined with the Crime Bill and becomes law, creating new funding opportunities, the interstate enforcement of protection from abuse orders, and the prohibition of weapons possession by persons subject to protection from abuse orders.
- 1995 Public Law 405, an act to implement the recommendations of the study concerning parental rights and responsibilities (see 1993) is passed, requiring state certification of batterer intervention programs, mandating for development of standards for batterer intervention programs and visitation centers, expanding conditions of parent-child contact in cases of domestic abuse, establishing training requirements and clarifying duties for guardians ad litem.
- The first edition of the MCFCS Volunteer Training Manual is published.
- 1996 In cooperation with MCFCS, Susan Fuller develops and coordinates Maine's Silent Witness display representing Maine women murdered by their intimate partners in 1996.

1997

Spruce Run opens three units of transitional housing in Bangor, in partnership with Community Housing of Maine (CHOM) owning the units, and Spruce Run selecting residents and providing case management.

Spruce Run and Womancare add a legal advocate to staff, funded by a collaborative grant with the Penquis Law Project.

Spruce Run staff provide training on domestic violence for all employees of Bangor Mental Health Institute.

The Maine Homicide Review Panel is created.

Maine's protection from abuse statute is amended to comply with federal law prohibiting possession of firearms by people subject to protection orders where there is a finding of a "credible threat to the physical safety of an intimate partner or a child".

A family division is created within the state's district court.

1998

Spruce Run hosted a conference on Mental Health and Domestic Violence, featuring Dr. Mary Harvey of the Cambridge Hospital's Victims of Violence Program as the keynote speaker.

Womancare Board of Directors becomes a Steering Committee under newly adopted consensus decision-making model.

First "Dove Award" given to Christopher Almy, District Attorney for Piscataquis and Penobscot Counties and Womancare Steering Committee member.

1999

In collaboration with the Muskie School, Spruce Run and (other MCEVD projects) established outreach positions at Eastern Maine Medical Center and at Child Protective Services. Funding from Maine DHHS created a similar outreach position at the DHHS welfare office. All these changes brought Spruce Run's staff to 16.

An Act to Protect Victims of Crimes in the Workplace requires Maine employers to grant reasonable and necessary leave from work, with or without pay, for an employee to attend court, get medical treatment, or obtain other services necessitated by domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, unless the employer would sustain undue hardship as a result.

2000

In a collaborative grant with the Training and Development Corporation, Spruce Run developed a 30-hour training on domestic violence, the work place and assisting women in the "welfare to work" program.

The Maine Legislature passes a resolution to establish a Commission to Study Domestic Violence. The multi-disciplinary Commission meets for a period of many months and releases a report in December of 2001, and in 2002, the Legislature enacts a resulting bill that requires additional information to bail commissioners before pre-conviction bail may be set and additional law enforcement policies on victim notification upon an abuser's release from jail.

In Governor Angus King's State of the State Address, he declares violence against women and children "Maine's Public Enemy Number One" while pointing to seats in the Legislature hall that were left empty to represent those who were killed by domestic abusers.

2001 The Maine Legislature passes the “Violence Intervention and Prevention” (VIP) bill to increase funding to domestic violence projects and sexual assault centers for the first time in 16 years.

2002 The Maine Legislature enacts a law which grants judges the discretion to issue a temporary protection from abuse order that prohibits the defendant from possessing a firearm or other dangerous weapon.

As new money came from the VIP, the 9/11 attacks and subsequent changes in federal funding opportunities resulted in the loss of federal funds that offset any gains that VIP might have provided, and Maine state revenues were in decline, resulting in the VIP funds promised for the second half of the biennium being eliminated. Spruce Run had to eliminate the Eastern Maine Medical Center advocate and scale back its Child Protective liaison work.

2003

On October 7, 2004, Maine Governor John Baldacci signs an Executive Order that required all state agencies to partner with the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence and the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault to develop, implement and promote workplace policies that address domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Spruce Run is a primary partner in carrying out the work of MCEDV in the implementation of the executive order.

Spruce Run receives the Agency of Distinction Award from WLBZ-TV and the United Way of Eastern Maine.

Spruce Run launched a \$500,000 campaign to grow its Endowment Trust – achieving the goal five years later.

2004

Spruce Run launches the Library Campaign for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, donating books to nearly all libraries in Penobscot County. The campaign was later taken up by the MCEDV and implemented statewide.

Enhancing Spruce Run's collaborations with the Penobscot Nation, we created the position of Justice System Coordinator, including expanded outreach to Penobscot Nation's court and public welfare system.

2006

L.D. 1881 - An Act Amending the Animal Welfare Laws is signed into law. This bill allows people to request protection for their companion animals & companion livestock when requesting a Permanent Protection From Abuse (PFA) order for themselves.

Spruce Run is able to re-establish its Child Protective Liaison position as MCEdV receives an Office on Violence Against Women, Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Enforcement Grant. Project partners also include members of the New Mainers Domestic Violence Partnership: United Somali Women of Maine, Sudanese Development Institute of Maine, Kalila Oon Center and Tengo Voz.

2006

Womancare's first-ever Capital Campaign, "A New Day", an effort to raise \$350,000. Womancare greatly needs a new facility.

2007

L.D. 988 – An Act To Improve the Protection from Abuse Laws. Signed into law June 20, 2007, this bill allows current and former dating partners, whether or not sexual partners, and stalking and sexual assault victims to seek relief under the protection from abuse laws.

2008

Spruce Run adds an attorney to staff as MCEDV is awarded a continuation of its Legal Assistance for Victims (LAV) Grant from the Office on Violence Against Women. The LAV program expands to providing funding for seven (7) domestic violence projects to employ an attorney to provide civil legal representation to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking.

In collaboration with Penquis, Spruce Run extends transitional housing and services to Millinocket.

Spruce Run receives an extension and expansion of its transitional housing and services grant to extend these services to Lincoln, bringing total transitional housing capacity to 20 units.

Spruce Run celebrates its 35th anniversary with a Homecoming Reunion.

2009

Womancare celebrates thirty years of service and opens the doors to its new building.

2011

Womancare hosts its 15th Annual "Race to End Abuse".

2012 Womancare and Spruce Run establish a “Partnership Committee” to address the proposal from DHHS to fund only one domestic violence resource center contract in the Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties region.

As part of comprehensive homicide reduction plan, MCEDV joined with partners including the Maine Commission on Domestic and Sexual Abuse, the Maine Department of Public Safety, the Attorney General’s Office and the Maine Criminal Justice Academy to pass legislation that mandates the use a of a standardized, evidence-based risk assessment tool for domestic violence offenders post-arrest.

2013 Spruce Run celebrates 40 years of working to end violence in our homes and communities.

2013 President Obama signs the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

2013 Womancare and Spruce Run merge, creating Spruce Run-Womancare Alliance. The merged organization continues to be committed to providing high-quality services to people affected by domestic abuse in Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties.

- 2014 The United Way of Eastern Maine presents Spruce Run-Womancare Alliance with the Agency of Distinction Award for its successful merger.
- 2015 The Alliance pays off the mortgage for the Dover-Foxcroft Resource Center.
- 2015 The Alliance receives a Rural Grant through the Office on Violence Against Women to expand services to rural communities, as well as an Arrest Grant to expand services to victims and survivors of human trafficking.
- 2016 The Alliance relaunches its website with a new look!
- 2016 Spruce Run-Womancare Alliance affirms a new structure including four teams with Team Leaders – Outreach & Advocacy Team, Residential Team, Legal Team, and Community Response Team - and a Facilitative Director.
- 2017 Spruce Run-Womancare Alliance announces the new name for the organization at their Annual Meeting.

2017 The organization officially begins using its new name in July rolls out a new logo, tagline, and over-all look for outreach materials.

2017 The Bangor High-Risk Task Force helps draft and provide expert testimony for LD 1434, “An Act To Amend the Laws Governing Law Enforcement’s Access to, and Access to Information about, Certain Persons in Hospitals and Mental Health Facilities.” LD #1434 is enacted and included in training for all Law Enforcement in the State of Maine.

2019 Maine’s domestic violence and sexual assault programs see the first increase in funds from the state in over two decades with LD 1171 allocating \$5 million dollars across the state.