

With Survivors, Always: Domestic Violence Awareness Month 2025

With Survivors, Always: Domestic Violence Awareness Month 2025: The Battle Against Domestic Violence: Forty Years of Progression, Digression, and the Work Ahead

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October is [Domestic Violence Awareness Month](#) (DVAM), a time to honor survivors, remember those lost, and recommit to building safer futures. This year's theme, "With Survivors, Always," serves as both a call to action and a reminder that survivors deserve safety, support, and solidarity—not sometimes, but always.

The past forty years tell a story of both progress and painful setbacks. In 1984, *Thurman v. City of Torrington* forced Connecticut to pass mandatory-arrest laws after Tracey Thurman nearly lost her life when police ignored repeated pleas for help. Just five years later, *DeShaney v. Winnebago County* ruled that government agencies are not constitutionally required to protect individuals from private violence, underscoring that meaningful change depends on legislation rather than the Constitution.

Through the years, courts have shaped how domestic violence cases are handled. *People v. Humphrey* (1996) validated survivors' perspectives in self-defense cases. *Crawford v. Washington* (2004) reshaped the rules of evidence, complicating prosecutions but prompting innovation. Firearms cases such as *Hayes* (2009), *Castleman* (2014), *Voisine* (2016), and *Rahimi* (2024) steadily closed loopholes, affirming that keeping guns from abusers saves lives. In *Nicholson v. Scopetta* (2004), the New York courts confirmed that child welfare systems must protect, not punish, survivors.



the 911 Cell Phone Bank generates literal lifelines of hope for victims and survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.

The message from this history is clear: progress is possible, but never guaranteed. Every advance has been earned through persistence, and setbacks highlight that the work is far from complete.

Policy change remains within reach. States have the power to adopt measures that protect survivors. Florida provides one example. Statute § 705.185 requires that lost-and-found property containing personal information, such as cell phones, be securely cleared or destroyed. While designed to protect businesses from liability, the statute has also created a supply of safe devices that can be repurposed to support survivors.

Phones once forgotten in lost-and-found bins take on new meaning when placed in the hands of survivors of domestic violence and [human](#)

[trafficking](#). For many, their own devices have become tools of control—monitored, tracked, and unsafe. A simple, unconnected phone becomes a lifeline: a way to call for help, reach resources, and begin rebuilding independence.

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We don't need to wait for another tragedy or court ruling to move forward. States have the power right now to adopt policies that protect survivors.”

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For Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) 2025, the Domestic Violence Awareness Project Advisory Group is pleased to introduce a new theme: With Survivors, Always | Con sobrevivientes. Siempre

This Domestic Violence Awareness Month, With Survivors, Always challenges communities to move beyond observation and toward action. Stronger protections, broader support networks, and everyday solidarity are essential. Survivors deserve nothing less.

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