



CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES
ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
TOGETHER

THE JOINT EXPERIENCE OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND OPIOID USE IN RURAL VERMONT

CIRCLE HAS BEEN PARTICIPATING IN A RESEARCH project with Boston University and Suffolk University funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for the past 3 years. Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) contribute separately to poor health and psychosocial outcomes in rural communities, and together they create a synergistic effect: opioid use may precede IPV and experiencing IPV is related to subsequent opioid use.

HOW WE DID THIS STUDY

We conducted one-on-one telephone interviews with 33 people in rural Vermont who had experiences with both IPV and OUD. The interview guide was developed in consultation with Diane Kinney of Circle, Inc, and our project advisory board of 4 individuals with lived experiences of OUD and IPV.

WHAT WE FOUND

(1) Geographic isolation and transportation barriers: Participants reported that they often lived many miles away from the nearest town where they might seek help. One participant shared that she lived with her partner and their newborn baby “on a back road. I knew I wanted to get out [of the situation],” but the nearest town was two miles away. In winter, when her partner left the house for the day, “he would take my shoes and all the baby’s warm winter gear.” This turned a feasible walk for a young woman into an impossible feat.

(2) Social isolation. Social isolation was frequently intentionally cultivated by abusive partners and made it easier for them to control survivors using drugs, exacerbating the

connection between opioid use and IPV victimization. After experiencing a personal tragedy and being evicted from her home, Danielle said her partner “picked me up, he paid all my bills, moved all my stuff into his apartment, and then he just started feeding my habit. And then I was stuck with this monster that I had to pretend to like because I was now completely reliant on him.”

(3) Lack of integrated services and (4) inaccessible services. The third and fourth themes both relate to service provision. A **lack of integrated services**, means services are not well-suited to meet the needs of clients experiencing *both* IPV and OUD. “I think there needs to be more places where it’s a combination of getting out of toxicity and detoxing,” said Laurie, referencing the toxicity of abusive relationships.

(5) Amplified stigma in small communities. Finally, our participants spoke about the amplification of stigma in small towns where “everyone knows everyone.” In tight-knit communities, people trying to access services felt highly visible and worried that their personal problems would become local gossip.

WHAT THESE FINDINGS MEAN

Our results demonstrate that there is a large service and resource gap for people experiencing OUD and IPV, and that bringing people with lived experience together with human services professionals and volunteers can help us create the interventions that can fill that gap. Additional investment in housing, transportation, and direct support to rural substance use treatment and survivor advocacy organizations is necessary to meet the needs of rural Vermont residents.

The full research article can be found in *The Journal of Rural Health*, 37 (2021) 35–44

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BOARD CHAIR REPORT

DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

Thank you for your continued support of Circle during this trying year of Covid. The staff have had to be creative, resilient, and flexible in delivering services to survivors throughout Washington County. They have done an exceptional job in difficult circumstances. I want to thank them for their dedication to fulfilling Circle's Mission.

Char Rinker has just retired from the Board of Directors. Char has served on the Board for 24 years, including 16 years as Chair. In my three years of working with her, she was a reservoir of institutional knowledge that helped me to learn about this organization. She tirelessly and compassionately filled many volunteer roles, including fundraiser, treasurer, a sounding board for the directors, and attendee at most outreach events. I wish her all the best now that she has much more time to spend with her grandchildren!

Their raw trauma forced me to ask questions and seek out information and organizations that advocate to end domestic and sexual violence in my community.

Her presence will be difficult to replace. As the new Chair, I bring an academic and human rights activist background. I am a professor at Norwich University, specializing in the history of international human rights law and American civil rights. Restorative justice has been a passion of mine, with service on the boards of the Barre and Montpelier Community Justice Centers. And I, like many of you, have witnessed incidents of domestic and sexual violence.

The stories of survivors brought me to Circle. Zimbabwean asylum seekers in whose cases I testified as an expert witness. A close friend who managed to leave two abusive long-term relationships. A teenager my wife and I sheltered for three months. Students who confided experiences with dating violence. Others. Their raw trauma forced me to ask questions and seek out information and organizations that advocate to end domestic and sexual violence in my community.

You can make a difference in the lives of Washington County residents who are victims/survivors of domestic violence. A gift to Circle is a significant way to provide safety to adults and children escaping domestic violence in our community. Your tax-deductible donation directly funds services such as our emergency shelter, support groups, court advocacy, and a 24-hour hotline.

To make a gift please send in a check in the envelope provided or use the website <https://www.circlevt.org/donate/>.

You can also provide support by including Circle in your will, trust, or beneficiary designation, while receiving financial and tax benefits for you and your family. Reach out to our hotline at 877-543-9498 for more information.

Thank you for your continued support of Circle. I am so appreciative of your monetary, in-kind, and in-person assistance. We will make a difference, together.

Rowly Brucken

To the world
you may be one person,
but to one person
you may be the world

You can make a difference! Circle is always looking for committed volunteers to help with our crucial work. With the help of our dedicated volunteers, Circle provides 24-hour hotline services, ensuring that those in need can contact a trained advocate whenever necessary. Volunteers also spend time in our shelter, are active members on our Board of Directors, provide childcare, and assist with public awareness events.



If you or someone in your life is interested in volunteering with Circle, please call us today or go to our website, www.circlevt.org, to find out more about volunteer opportunities!

CIRCLE STAFF:

Karol Diamond, *Co-Director*
Diane Kinney, *Co-Director*
Eliza Cain, *Legal Services Coordinator*
Trista Jackson, *Shelter Coordinator*
Carrie Harvey, *Youth and Family Services Coordinator*
Callie Flanders, *Direct Services Coordinator*
Hannah Sliter, *Court Advocate*

BOARD:

Rowly Brucken, *Chair*
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LISA'S STORY

I have Social Anxiety. I have PTSD. I am a survivor of Domestic Violence. I am in Recovery.

I still have a hard time making plans because I always wish I hadn't and often times back out.

I go to work, grocery store (to pick up what I ordered online) and home.

I take my dog to run in areas where we likely won't see people.

It's not because I don't like people, and it's not that I can't handle being with people. It's because when I plan to go somewhere public my brain clicks into full(PTSD) alert... is it safe...will I have a panic attack, or better yet an asthma attack, and these days maybe a heart attack.

This is my reality, most of the time...I isolate and then worry that I'll always be alone...Alone is safe, alone doesn't hurt. Believe me this is actually an improvement from 2yrs ago when I was just plain terrified 24/7, when I left my abuser I went to treatment and was taken in by a DV shelter that saved my life...

I am in therapy with the best counselor in the world, and I have amazing friends and family...I live in a security building and wake up at night to check the door at least three times...because what if...

I have pep talks with myself just to do necessary errands... This sounds crazy right!

Well I assure you I'm not, I made my therapist evaluate

me for all kinds of mental illness, because I felt crazy...even after all the gaslighting from a partner who just didn't get it and made things infinitely worse telling me I was crazy and everything was my fault...because that fear and anxiety kept me from running away, it kept me from believing that I didn't have to live with someone who constantly belittled and abused me emotionally and physically...He actually left me for dead twice...I know this is a lot and it's not easy to reveal even though, the only ones reading this are in my support system.

But I am still here, my story isn't over; I will go on and every day is a little better...I found my way out of the dark, and I open the door for others to be in my life at my pace...Heck, I am even mostly ready to date again...I know the right person is out there, and I know that I don't have to settle for anything less than what I deserve. I have seen the light at the end of a very dark tunnel and it's bigger every day...

If you know someone who is struggling with DV just be there, and be ready because they will need you...don't give up on them because they don't leave, or you think it's not that bad because they haven't left... I tried to leave nine times. This is reality. This fight is for a life. Love isn't supposed to hurt. #domesticviolenceawareness

—Lisa M.

Giving Through VtSHARES, Employer Matching Gifts, and Wills and Trusts

VtSHARES provides Vermont State employees with an efficient and consistent opportunity for charitable giving through payroll deductions. Employees can choose to contribute to numerous Vermont nonprofit organizations that support the communities in which they live, work, play and raise their families.

You may choose the convenience of having your donations of choice made either through a single payroll deduction in January, or deducted each pay period. Participation is optional and tax deductible. Please know that every donation makes a significant difference and no donation is considered too small or large—amounts are based upon your comfort level.

1. Go to www.vtshares.vermont.gov
2. Choose Circle (#12-310) as your nonprofit organization
3. Fill out the pledge form

Employer Matching Gift Program

Double or even triple your donation! As a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Circle is eligible for many employers' matching gifts programs. Find out if your company has a matching gift policy to increase your support of Circle!

Wills and Living Trusts

Making Circle a beneficiary in your will or living trust enables you to support our mission and make a difference in the lives of women and families. A bequest is easy to arrange and can be easily modified to address your changing needs. Please consider adding Circle to your will or living trust.

Circle can now accept gifts of stocks, mutual funds or electronic transfer of cash gifts. Please reach out to for more information.

Please let us know if you have already included Circle in your estate plan or if you are considering doing so. We would love to hear from you!

CIRCLE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION JUNE 30, 2021

ASSETS

Current Assets:		
Cash	\$ 181,427.00	
Investments	\$ 277,467.00	
Accounts receivable	\$ 103,526.00	
Prepaid expenses	\$ 6,175.00	
Deposit	\$ 1,000.00	
		\$ 569,595.00
Property and equipment:		
Fixed assets	\$ 593,438.00	
Accumulated depreciation	\$(326,637.00)	
		\$ 264,801.00
Total assets	<u>\$ 834,396.00</u>	

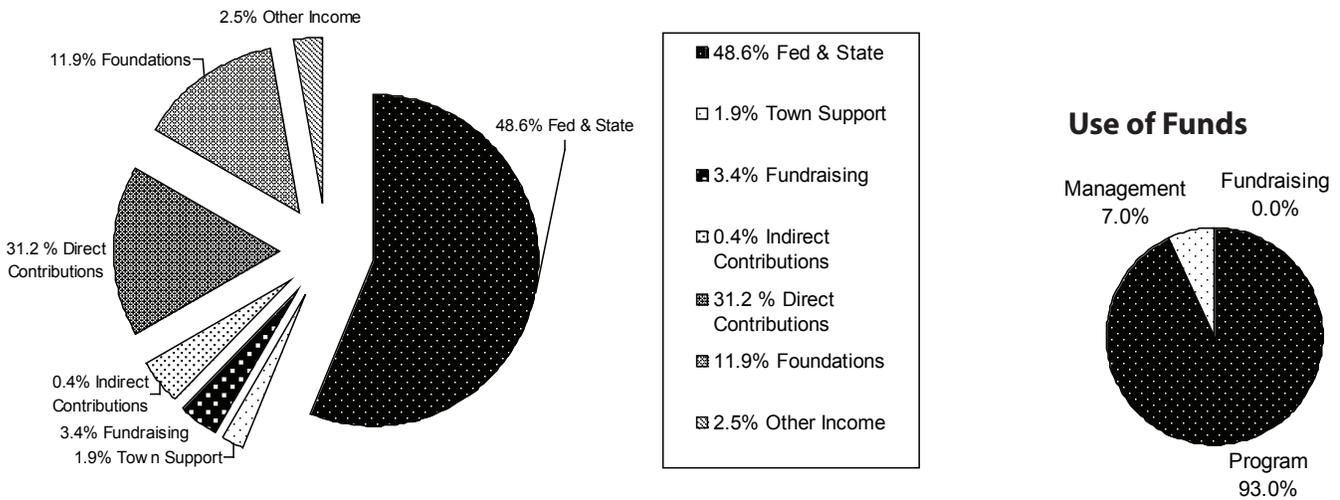
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current liabilities:		
Accounts payable	\$ 17,799.00	
Accrued expenses	\$ 1,364.00	
Accrued payroll and vacation	\$ 14,356.00	
		\$ 33,519.00
Long term liabilities:		
Deferred Mortgage-City of Barre	\$ 35,600.00	
Total long term liabilities		\$ 35,600.00
Total Liabilities	<u>\$ 69,119.00</u>	
Net assets:		
Unrestricted fund balance	\$ 697,074.00	
Temporarily restricted fund balance	<u>\$ 68,203.00</u>	
		\$ 765,277.00
Total liabilities and Net Assets	<u>\$ 834,396.00</u>	

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
Support and revenue:			
Federal and state support	\$ 415,713.00		\$ 415,713.00
Town support	\$ 16,629.00		\$ 16,629.00
Fundraising events	\$ 28,952.00		\$ 28,952.00
Indirect contributions	\$ 3,453.00		\$ 3,453.00
Direct contributions	\$ 266,732.00		\$ 266,732.00
Foundation contributions	\$ 70,104.00	\$ 31,500.00	\$ 101,604.00
Interest income	\$ 251.00		\$ 251.00
Other Income	\$ 21,242.00		\$ 21,242.00
Gain on Investments	-		-
Total support and revenue	\$ 823,076.00	\$ 31,500.00	\$ 854,576.00
Net assets released from restrictions	<u>\$ 3,648.00</u>	<u>\$ (3,648.00)</u>	<u>\$ -</u>
Total support, revenue & reclassification	<u>\$ 826,724.00</u>	<u>\$ 27,852.00</u>	<u>\$ 854,576.00</u>
Expenses:			
Program	\$ 527,573.00		\$ 527,573.00
Management and general	\$ 40,063.00		\$ 40,063.00
Fundraising	-		-
Total expenses	<u>\$ 567,636.00</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 567,636.00</u>
Change in net assets	\$ 259,088.00	\$ 27,852.00	\$ 286,940.00
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 437,986.00	\$ 40,351.00	\$ 478,337.00
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 697,074.00</u>	<u>\$ 68,203.00</u>	<u>\$ 765,277.00</u>

FUNDING SOURCES



Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a rise both in the number of and the severity of domestic violence incidences in Washington County. Social distancing and other efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 have escalated the risk of violence for victims/survivors through more time spent at home and reduced access to advocacy and supports.

Throughout this pandemic, Circle Advocates continued to find new and creative ways to provide services, which allowed people to safely access supports through a variety of ways. This includes video conferencing, a resource that most have utilized during this time, from trainings to support groups to court hearings – it’s fair to say that over this past fiscal year, the majority of our work was done virtually. These new ways of providing services meant that Advocates did the following:

- Staff and volunteer advocates responded to 4,544 hotline calls.
- Shelter services were provided to 16 women and 17 children for a total of 1,503 bed nights.
- Circle provided community presentations to 259 individuals through the 18 trainings and workshops offered throughout Washington County.
- Advocates provided support to 111 plaintiffs during Final Relief from Abuse Hearings, and assisted 78 individuals file for temporary orders.
- Court Education Program was presented to 17 individuals, and our Court Hour Program, which offers one-on-one support to plaintiffs as they prepare for their final hearings, was offered to 38 individuals.
- Circle held 54 support group sessions, which 27 unduplicated women attended.
- Our prevention based programs in schools reached a total of 32 students through 2 presentations.
- Over 1,500 people received direct services from Circle, which are maintained by trained staff and volunteer advocates.
- Our organization continues to rely heavily on the vast support of its many dedicated volunteers; Board Members, Hotline Advocates, and Shelter Support have all contributed 6,642 hours to the work of Circle.

Our services include:

Shelter: Emergency Shelter for women and children fleeing from domestic abuse

Shelter: Youth Program: Available to children staying in shelter

Toll Free Confidential 24-Hour Hot Line (1-877-543-9498)

Emergency, Civil and Criminal Court Advocacy

Support Groups

Prevention Education Offered to Schools Throughout Washington County

Educational Presentations and Trainings: offered to civic organizations and businesses.

Information and Referral: information about domestic violence and community resources, as well as individualized advocacy and referral to social service, legal, employment, counseling, and housing options.

STORIES of COURAGE AND SURVIVAL

“What the public does not realize is that being attacked affects all aspects of your life and it takes years to recover. I will never forget but the days are becoming easier as I rebuild.”

—A SHELTER RESIDENT



What if I told you I was a victim of intimate partner violence even though he never laid a hand on me? Would you believe me? I didn't. That's why it took so long, as in decades, before I left. He exerted power and control over me daily and knew just how to manipulate me to do what he wanted. And I knew not to cross his path or he would make my life impossible.

I didn't see it as abuse. It started out so subtle. My turning point was when I made boundaries and stuck to them, and watched my life fall apart in front of my eyes. He couldn't handle me saying no. Things were thrown at me, he kept visible guns around the house, and he blocked me from leaving the house. But no, he never laid a hand on me. But the screaming...the everything was always my fault and he was the victim, and holding me hostage in my own home took a toll on my physical health. He controlled when I got up and when I went to sleep, and every activity I did in between. No meal I made was good enough, I'd be lectured on end if I got the wrong brand of something at the store. I was exhausted.

You know what really made me not even think it was abuse? All of his excuses. Childhood trauma, alcoholism, work problems.... Is he really an abuser if he is under the influence of alcohol and drugs? Is he really an abuser if it's because of his own mental health problems? I now know, Yes he is!!!

I thought I had it under control...until I didn't. He convinced me that he needed me and that I was helping him, but I wasn't. Intimate partner violence can happen to anyone and it can be subtle. It still is painful and tears families apart and leaves lives in ruins. I also believe if I hadn't left I would have eventually become a victim of physical abuse, or far worse. Sometimes I wish he would have hit me, because then it would be easier for people to believe and understand my story.



The following is excerpted from a longer story

I would say I met the perfect man in March of 2016. He was kind, affectionate, fun and funny, a great father to his daughter and a hard worker. What transpired was after a short dating sprint, I thought we were madly in love and that I had finally found my prince. As the days went on after we were married I started to see a husband that was slipping away to alcohol addiction. He began being drunk all day, every day. He started becoming agitated for no reason and the man I married no longer existed...Before I knew it, I was being strangled and fought for my life. It took several calls to get 911 as he wouldn't let me call for help.

Friends helped me fix everything he had broken during the two days I was gone to stay safe. I also filed for divorce but was told I had to wait six months in case I changed my mind. Worst of all, my employer became not supportive for the time I was needing to take for counseling, meeting with the victims advocate as we worked the case and court appearances even though I had a month of time to take. Two days before the bullet proof doors were installed into the office I was fired. I told the CEO I prayed no man would hurt his daughters nor that she gets fired because of an attack.

What the public does not realize is that being attacked affects all aspects of your life and it takes years to recover. I will never forget but the days are becoming easier as I rebuild.



It is often hard to define or label someone else's behavior when you are in the middle of a relationship. It feels complicated, messy and unclear. So here are some of the things that people may feel and do when in abusive situations:

- You feel like you are walking on eggshells in your own home.
- You justify and make excuses for your partner's bad behaviors
- You don't feel comfortable having people over to your place. Or maybe you wouldn't even dare to invite people over.
- When you try to explain yourself, reasons are disregarded as invalid "excuses."
- You praise your partner incessantly because that keeps them happy and calm.
- Conversations don't end until you agree with the partner. There is not the option to "agree to disagree." (By the way: this is not a conversation—it's brain washing, coercion, manipulation, power and control.)
- You have no time to look after yourself. You are made to feel guilty and ashamed if you take the time or money for self-care.
- In the relationship, sex happens when the partner wants it (and often whenever the partner wants it) but not when you are interested.
- You may have access to money, but not have any real say in how the money is spent or saved. You are guilted, shamed and coerced into agreeing with your partner about how money is spent, earned and borrowed.
- You know well Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Your partner is charming and wonderful in public. A terror behind closed doors.
- You feel like you need to record conversations with your partner because what is said one day is so often denied or reversed later.
- Sometimes you feel that you are crazy.
- You feel anxious about going out or seeing friends because of the repercussions you anticipate when you get home.
- You are no longer in touch with friends and/or family
- When you are out, you worry about how your partner will be when you get home. Or the reverse. Worried how your partner will be when they get home.
- Your moods hinge on the behavior of your partner. If your partner is feeling good, then a good day. If not, then no one is allowed to be happy.
- You feel more anxious about a partner's reaction to difficulties than dealing with the difficulty itself. When shit happens, such as a fender bender, dealing with your partner is the worst, most anxiety provoking part of it.
- You lie to prevent your partner from "blowing a gasket." An 11 year old, whose father was abusive, wisely noted, "The truth may set you free, but it can also get you killed". In an abusive relationship, you lie to survive.

You may recognize yourself, a friend or a loved one. If many of these points describe someone you know, they are being abused.



"To all the women out there going through this in the moment or who are in recovery phase, I would say stay strong and keep moving. You are your best advocate. Seek what you want and deserve in life, nothing less. This my new favorite motto." —A SHELTER RESIDENT

Circle is Now Listed With AmazonSmile!

What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. You can choose from nearly one million organizations to support.

How do I shop at AmazonSmile?

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to AmazonSmile to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.

Which products on AmazonSmile are eligible for charitable donations?

Tens of millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. Recurring Subscribe-and-Save purchases and subscription renewals are not currently eligible.

Can I use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?

Yes, you use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

How do I select a charitable organization to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?

On your first visit to AmazonSmile, you need to select Circle Inc. Location: Barre, VT in order for us to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. We will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make on AmazonSmile will result in a donation.



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If you or someone
you know needs help,
please call our toll-free
24-hour confidential
hotline at
1-877-543-9498

CIRCLE SERVICES

Shelter: Emergency Shelter for women and children fleeing from domestic abuse

Shelter: Youth Program: Available to children staying in shelter

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SHELTER WISH LIST

Walmart Cards
Gas Cards
Grocery Cards
Laundry Detergent
Toilet Paper
Paper towels
Kleenex
Dishwasher Detergent
Pads/Tampons
Larger Sized Diapers/
Pull Ups/Wipes
Reusable shopping bags



**For more information,
please call our toll free hotline
1-877-543-9498**

*When making your contribution this year, please consider providing your email.
So much is being done remotely these days, we want to make sure we are able to stay in contact!*