



PROPELLED INTO OUR FUTURE

For Safe+Sound Somerset, 2020 was the year we faced a *crisis within a crisis* as the frequency and dangers of domestic abuse increased during the pandemic. We responded with new and expanded resources to help survivors seek safety.

2020 will also long be remembered as pivotal to our organization's history. The COVID-19 pandemic propelled S+SS into our future with urgency, firmly embedded in the progressive survivor-centered trauma services needed to support those we serve. Also, during the pandemic, we launched programs to support access to housing with our Domestic Violence Housing First Initiative and connect families to basic needs and services through our Family Advocacy Program.

On a moment's notice, S+SS transitioned from 100% in-person services to totally remote ones to ensure that programs remained available to survivors now forced to stay at home, often with their abusers. This heightened stress of sheltering in place along with job losses and social instability increased the demand for our services and intensified the complexity of the cases and the care required. As a result, **we served 4,040 survivors this past year, a 21% increase, in addition to providing 40% more services overall during 2020.**

As we move into 2021, we are already seeing the trend of increased services continue and are in the midst of planning how to meet this expanded need for services in the years to come. This will be particularly needed in marginalized communities strongly impacted by personal loss and financial insecurity from COVID-19, as well as the continued collective trauma of racism and oppression brought to the forefront in 2020.



“

Safe+Sound saved my life. Today I'm living on my own and making plans for my future. I don't know where I'd be without your help.”

- Anonymous Survivor



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Safe+Sound Somerset's trauma-informed, evidence-based programs provide survivors of domestic abuse with the support and tools they need to reclaim their power and control to build independent lives, free from violence and abuse. This support and these tools keep survivors from returning to abusive homes and are the difference between someone being safe or at risk of danger, and even death.

At Safe+Sound Somerset, all programs are provided at no cost to clients; no survivor is ever turned away.

Our core values embrace equity and we welcome any survivor regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, gender expression or economic background. Confidential services are not limited by geography as they are fully accessible remotely and available in English, Spanish and other languages as needed.

CREATING SAFETY

Our core services focus on providing immediate safety to adults and their children who are at physical, emotional or other risk resulting from domestic abuse. Once safety and stability are established, survivors are able to achieve lasting and greater levels of hope and healing.



24/7 Call and Text Crisis Hotline

The point of entry for all services; **2,272 calls and texts** were answered from **2,233 clients**



Domestic Violence Response Team

74 calls from police departments; **17,298 on-call volunteer hours**



Safe House

5,506 nights of shelter for **30 adults and 27 children** in our Safe House and Transitional Housing*



Domestic Violence Liaisons

In Somerset County, **605** and **57 service referrals** provided to **120 adults** and **277 children**, respectively, through DCP&P

In Hunterdon County, **278** and **96 service referrals** provided to **57 adults** and **108 children**, respectively, through DCP&P

*The Safe House remained open throughout the pandemic at reduced capacity to accommodate social distancing for COVID-19 safety. To meet the sheltering needs of clients in crisis, we added offsite emergency housing with the same support services in 2020. This hybrid model has been adopted permanently.

Janelle needed help building a life for herself and her son Mikey that was free from domestic abuse; this goal was impacted by the systemic racism she faced as a Black woman. Janelle grew up in a home with domestic violence and lacked role models of healthy relationships, as did many of her friends and extended family.

Our Domestic Violence Liaisons (DVL) participate in NJ Department of Child Permanency & Protection (DCP&P) cases where domestic violence might be occurring. All of these situations involve the risk of children being removed from parental care if the living environment is deemed unsafe for a child.

By listening to Janelle without judgement, the DVL was able to gain her trust by addressing her concerns about accepting help from outside her community. An important part of our work was ensuring she understood her rights and the options available to her family. Working with the DVL, Janelle gained information and tools, and accessed community resources to make changes to achieve safety for herself and her son. She built a network of support and is working to end intergenerational violence for Mikey and his future family.





BUILDING HOPE

By supporting clients with needed skills, education and resources, they gain the power and control to build vibrant lives for themselves and their families.



Family Advocacy

In its first full year, **74 clients** received **475 case management sessions** and **\$6,802** in direct assistance.



Financial Empowerment Center

91 clients participated in **480 coaching sessions**.

DV Housing First services were launched in September and provided **\$23,300** in housing assistance to **10 survivors**.



Legal Advocacy

633 survivors (an increase of 31%) received **1,990 units** of legal support and case management, court preparation and accompaniment, restraining order counseling and dismissal counseling.

Almost three years after receiving services from S+SS, staff received a hotline call from Juanita. Leaving an abusive situation can be particularly difficult for immigrants due to loss of traditional family support, lack of proficiency in English, and unfamiliarity with US laws and services.

Due to the pandemic, Juanita lost her job and became unable to support herself and children. She began to receive threats from her abuser that she would lose custody of her children and be deported if they did not move back into the home of the abuser. She moved back into this unsafe home, and the violence started soon after and escalated quickly.

Juanita turned to S+SS, and we were able to support her with a bi-lingual legal counselor who secured a more favorable custody agreement. She and her daughter received counseling to heal from the trauma of these recent events. Today, Juanita is back to work and the family is happy and safe in their new permanent housing arrangement.



EMPOWERING HEALING

We use a progressive array of evidence-based and trauma-informed modalities to help survivors heal from their experiences with domestic abuse. We were the first DV organization in the country to use Prolonged Exposure Therapy for the treatment of survivors with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder related to domestic abuse.

Our clinical team, while continuing to meet the needs of their clients, created the infrastructure and updated organizational protocols for remote services. Confidentiality and security of clients remained paramount as we transitioned to virtual counseling sessions and group workshops supported by a new paperless, electronic client record system and technology systems.



Individual Counseling for Adults

401 adult survivors participated in **2,805** traditional, parent and family counseling sessions, including Cognitive Behavioral (CBT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), and Prolonged Exposure (PE) Therapies for PTSD.



Individual Counseling for Children

51 children (aged 3 to 17) participated in **605** Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and traditional counseling sessions.



Psycho-educational, Supportive Group Counseling

34 survivors participated in **241** group sessions.

Among positive outcomes in 2020, 95% of clients were able to seamlessly transition to remote services, our counseling compliance rate increased from 65% in 2019 to over 90%, and the rate of no-shows decreased from 35% in 2019 to 10%. Barriers such as lack of transportation and need for childcare decreased; flexibility around appointment times increased.





SPEAK™ OUTREACH & EDUCATION

SPEAK interacts with the community to create awareness of domestic violence and our organization's services for everyone in need of our help. We provide educational programs, workshops and training on topics related to domestic abuse which provide the information, skills and tools needed to break free of violence.



Survivor Outreach
1,238 community members participated in 34 programs



Professional Outreach
23 programs provided to 1,509 professionals, including law enforcement, court, DCP&P, and school personnel



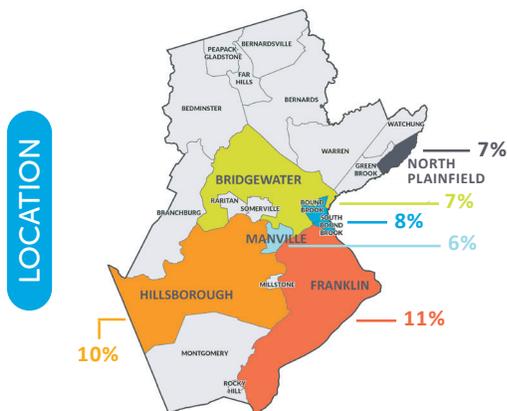
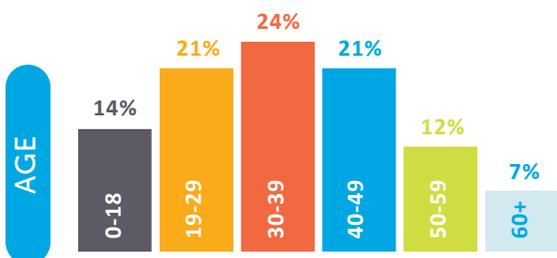
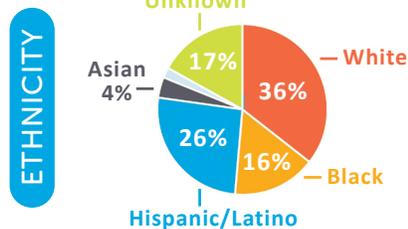
40-Hour DV Volunteers
189 volunteers provided 1,945 hours of volunteer support valued at over \$40,000.
17 new volunteers participated in 967 hours of volunteer training



Teen Education
58 programs provided to 1,184 high school students
40 Ask Ava podcast episodes with 371 listeners
1 leadership conference and 3 virtual camps attended by 156 high school students

In response to the pandemic, SPEAK transitioned to remote outreach and educational programs, workshops and trainings. Ten webinars were hosted and 54 articles were published on a range of topics related to domestic violence, including our COVID-19 and "What to Expect" series.

WHO WE SERVED IN 2020



If you are interested in helping, please consider a gift to support our mission. A monthly donation means a major impact by providing consistent funding for the programs that offer safety, hope and healing to survivors.

Visit safe-sound.org/donate to donate online or mail your contribution to:
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