

Good afternoon, [name]!

My name is Taylor Spencer Davis, and I am the Deputy Director of the Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy (SMCFA), the provider of advocacy services for victims of intimate partner violence here in St. Mary's County. I am also co-chair of the St. Mary's County Family Violence Coordinating Council (FVCC) and the Violence, Injury, and Trauma Action Team (VITA) of the Healthy St. Mary's Partnership (HSMP).

Pre-Covid, SMCFA and the Commission for Women would collaborate to provide dating violence prevention education, specifically assemblies, to high schools in St. Mary's County. While we have not been allowed to bring this education to SMCPs post-covid, the interest is still just as great in our community. In October, we hosted a Domestic Violence Awareness Panel with 70 attendees. The main concern our community members brought up was the lack of adequate education regarding intimate partner violence in our schools. This is a concern that is echoed to me by parents at every single outreach event I attend. I give presentations for Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS) in both their criminal justice classes and their health classes, and many folks in St. Mary's ask why we cannot do the same in St. Mary's. We are aware that dating violence is lightly touched upon using One Love Curriculum, but it is only addressed briefly, and the One Love curriculum does not educate students about local resources. We know targeted dating violence education for young people is crucial for preventing intimate partner violence as adults, and the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed that youth in St. Mary's are not only experiencing increased levels of dating violence, but that the levels of dating violence St. Mary's County youth are experiencing actually exceed the average of Maryland as a whole.

SMCFA and the HSMP would love to bring the same education we bring to CCPS to the students in our home county. The presentations can be provided absolutely free of cost, and they only take a single class period.

Thank you so much for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Taylor Spencer Davis

Deputy Director of SMCFA

Co-Chair of VITA (HSMP)