From January through March, FCADV conducted six Child Safety Regional Training Institutes across the state of Florida as a part of its Child Protection Investigations (CPI) Project. Trainings in “Navigating the Intersections between Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse” were held in West Palm Beach, Fort Myers, Orlando, Tampa, Jacksonville, and Tallahassee. Statewide, a total of 345 participants attended, including representatives from local certified domestic violence centers and child welfare agencies. Among the agencies were the Department of Children and Families (DCF), local community-based care agencies, and Guardian ad Litem, as well as law enforcement and other court and legal professionals.

Each Institute took place in one day, with a morning and an afternoon workshop. In the morning, Heather Pincelli, owner of On Demand Investigations, facilitated a workshop titled, “From GED to Master’s Degree: Conquering the Foster Care System and Beyond!” In this workshop, Ms. Pincelli shared her childhood experience of growing up with an abusive father and then being removed from her home and placed into foster care. After a number of abusive and neglectful foster homes, Ms. Pincelli eventually emancipated herself and started to work as a Child Protective Investigator for DCF, giving her an invaluable perspective of child welfare as both a child served by the system and an investigator serving the children and families involved in the system.
The afternoon workshop was facilitated by LaTrice B. Hogan. Ms. Hogan is the founder of INSPIRE Consulting and a current Instructor/AODA (Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse) Coordinator at Milwaukee Area Technical College. Under INSPIRE Consulting LLC, she trains nationally on abuse in later life and the interaction between domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health. Ms. Hogan conducted training on “Intimate Partner Violence and Substance Abuse,” in which she explored the correlations, overlaps, and connections between intimate partner violence and substance misuse. In her workshop, Ms. Hogan explored how substance misuse may not only be a coping mechanism for survivors, but can also be a tactic of the abuse itself, perpetrated by the abusive partner. FCADV received very positive feedback on both workshops and has contracted with both Ms. Pincelli and Ms. Hogan for further work on related topics.

21st Annual Rural Domestic Violence Statewide Training Institute

The 21st Annual Rural Domestic Violence Statewide Training Institute took place on May 16th and 17th at Saint Leo University in Pasco County and consisted of over 35 workshops, three plenary sessions, and a motivating keynote. The theme for this year’s conference, “Empowerment and Safety: Trauma-Informed Approaches to Domestic Violence,” highlighted the efforts of rural communities throughout Florida to enhance domestic violence service provision and community response. Workshop topics included cultural and linguistic service provision, preventing discrimination in the housing and legal system, trauma-informed practices, cultural competency, working with non-traditional partners, and offender accountability.

This year’s keynote speaker, Audrey Mabrey, a nationally known speaker and survivor, opened the Institute with an inspirational speech, telling her powerful story of the decisions she made and the impact of community support after being set on fire by her estranged husband at 26 years old. Mabrey, now the Chief Executive Officer of Ignite the Fires Within, highlighted the direct influence of her community on her healing process and the vital responsibility we all have in working to end domestic violence. Mabrey also facilitated a workshop focused on survivor-focused advocacy and empowerment.

During this two-day Institute, FCADV provided to over 160 conference attendees with resources, including brochures, DVDs, training materials, books, and tip-sheets. Attendees were encouraged to bring these materials back to their local rural communities to share with community members and partners. Conference attendees left with a wealth of knowledge and resources.

Mellie McDaniel Award

Since 2007, FCADV has presented the Mellie McDaniel Award to an outstanding law enforcement professional responding to domestic violence. The award is in memory of Mellie McDaniel who was a Victim Advocate for Jackson County and the wife of former Jackson County Sheriff John McDaniel. She was killed outside her home by two men with criminal histories. We honor her memory each year by presenting this award to an outstanding victim advocate or law enforcement professional working in a rural Florida community who has consistently demonstrated their commitment to creating a safer environment for survivors.

This year’s Mellie McDaniel Award recipient has demonstrated this commitment in Seminole County. Investigator Paul Michelson, the Intimate Violence Enhanced Service Team (InVEST) Investigator at the Seminole County Sheriff’s Office, was nominated by his captain and several law enforcement officers working in his county’s domestic violence unit for his unyielding perseverance and compassion in assisting survivors of domestic violence. Investigator Michelson is known for his relentless efforts to hold perpetrators accountable, his unwillingness to give up, and his focus on survivors’ needs throughout the county. During the conference, Investigator Michelson’s captain, Carey Love, shared with attendees several examples in which he went beyond the call of duty to assist survivors of domestic violence. Michelson was joined by his wife and son to accept the award on the second day of this year’s Institute.
FCADV’s 10th Annual Youth Summit was attended by over 220 people, both youth and adults. The event was hosted by FCADV and Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA). This year’s theme was “What’s Your Commitment?” Throughout the day-long event, participants had the chance to reflect on their role in preventing and ending dating violence and to make a commitment to evoke change in their communities. The Youth Summit took place the first Saturday of February, during Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. The event was the start of a month full of activities across the state to educate people about dating violence, empower youth leaders, and prevent violence before it ever occurs.

The Summit was emceed by a former student of Boynton Beach Community High School, where the Summit took place. She used her experience in a leadership class at the school to bring energy and enthusiasm to the morning. Performances by the Chobee Steelers and Step In School demonstrated how arts and music can be an integral part of programs that support youth leadership and promote positive relationships. The keynote Speaker, Paul Porter, spoke about violent messaging in music and the role of the media in promoting non-violence. As a radio DJ, Mr. Porter was able to share his own experience of learning about the impact of violent music and how he learned to take a stand against playing violent songs. Teens and adults engaged in a conversation about how to create and share positive music. Ramon Robinson, performing as Absoloot, shared a song written with teens at the 505 Teen Center in Palm Beach County. Working with FCADV and AVDA, the center has hosted mentoring groups for young men and boys. As part of those groups, the teenagers examined media messages and created their own hip hop songs about preventing violence. One of these songs was performed at the Youth Summit.

Participants of the 2018 Youth Summit gather next to a banner with their commitments to ending violence and chant, “Healthy Me, Healthy We!”

After lunch, participants had their choice of 18 workshops to attend for the remainder of the day. Two-thirds of these workshops were designed and led by teenagers. These workshops included constructing a banner featuring the question, “What’s Your Commitment?” to which people responded with words and drawings, writing a “Letter to My Ex” in which participants explored what healthy breakups could look like, and discussed ways to cope after bad relationships. Youth also led a workshop on activism and leadership, as well as a flash mob for One Billion Rising, a global movement to end violence against women.

Staff from Break the Cycle, a national dating violence prevention organization, were in attendance. They led three sessions of “Real Talk,” providing a supportive environment for teens to get real about relationships and abuse. Break the Cycle’s theme for the month was “Healthy Me, Healthy We,” and this was explored throughout the day in workshops, through social media, and by incorporating commitments to self into the day’s
Overall theme of a commitment to end violence.

Dating violence remains a prevalent issue that impacts teens daily. Studies show that one in four adolescents reports verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a dating partner each year. This violence is preventable.

Young people are working in their homes, schools, and communities to create a safer, more just world for all of us. By partnering with young people, we are able to work together to help prevent dating violence. The Youth Summit is one statewide gathering place for young people and the adults who support them to come together and learn more about dating violence and to get involved in activism to prevent it. Youth are at the forefront of making change throughout Florida to help us realize a violence-free future.

Absoloot and teens from the 505 Teen Center, along with staff from AVDA perform a song written by teenagers about ending violence.

To learn more about the effective support of youth leadership programs, check out this video: youtu.be/nxak6GsNXQ8

Economic Empowerment Statewide Institute

FCADV’s 2018 Economic Empowerment Statewide Institute was held in Tampa on April 11th and 12th. The goals of the Institute were to enhance the collaboration between certified domestic violence centers, financial literacy organizations, and community partners and to increase attendees’ knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of financial abuse. Institute participants learned about best practices to help survivors access safety and achieve economic independence from abusive partners.

Advocates participating in Florida’s Statewide Economic Empowerment Project received instruction from ProLiteracy, FCADV’s partner, on how to apply the integral components of sustainability within their local programs. Because financial abuse is a prominent factor contributing to survivors remaining in or returning to
abusive relationships, it is important that centers are able to continue economic empowerment services despite any changes to structure, staffing, or revenue.

Subjects such as access to TANF benefits, identity theft, housing rights, and divorce were incorporated into the Institute to empower advocates with tools to further support survivors. Attendees enhanced their knowledge about food and cash assistance so that survivors have increased awareness of available benefits. Barriers to economic security often include consumer challenges (credit) and identity theft. These topics were discussed from both advocacy and legal perspectives, offering advocates different approaches and resources to support survivors who have to overcome these barriers. Florida Legal Services (FLS) provided insight on the legal challenges highlighted by increased calls to the Statewide Legal Hotline pertaining to divorce and housing rights. The FLS team provided resources to attendees on how to provide support to survivors who may be faced with these barriers to financial independence.

Sponsored by the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the State of Florida, Department of Children and Families.