



# Safe Journeys

*Listen. Believe. Connect.*

Support for Survivors of Domestic & Sexual Violence



**SUMMER 2023**  
**The Journey:**  
**Safe Journeys Newsletter**  
  
**Volume 2, Issue 1**

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### A note from our Clinical Director

Safe Journeys provides a safe space where survivors can find various supports, one being our Counseling Program. I am the Clinical Director with Safe Journeys. I not only provide therapy services for victims/survivors/thrivers of domestic and sexual violence, but I oversee the counseling program. Our Counselors provide services to youth and adults, ages 6 and above, in Livingston and LaSalle counties. Services can be in-person, by telephone or Zoom.



**Ilirjana**

Safe Journeys' Counselors practice being victim-centered, meaning we focus on the needs and concerns of the client in a non-judgmental manner, while providing them with support and empowerment throughout the process. We recognize that meeting someone new and disclosing personal information may be difficult. With that, during the first few sessions, we engage in strength-based approaches and rapport building exercises directed towards the client.

When our Counselors assess client's readiness, they introduce the counseling Service Plan. On the Service Plan, clients identify their presenting issues, such as flashbacks, feelings of self-blame or increased anxiety. From there, clients then identify personal goals they would like to achieve to eliminate or relieve their presenting issues. A few examples of Service Plan goals are: identifying triggers, creating safety plans, relaxation/mindfulness techniques, education on the dynamic of violence or child sexual abuse, and emotion regulation skills. Creating this plan assists Counselors in reviewing clients progress towards these goals. When clients have met their goals, they will transition out of the counseling program. If a client decides they need more support, Safe Journeys will welcome them back.

### Staff Spotlight: Rhoda, Counselor



**Rhoda**

#### What is your role within Safe Journeys? How do you interact with survivors?

I serve at Safe Journeys as the adult counselor. I provide support and education to survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual violence who are over the age of 18. I interact with survivors everyday primarily through counseling sessions (by zoom, telephone, or face to face), check in calls, and session reminder texts.

#### Describe a typical workday.

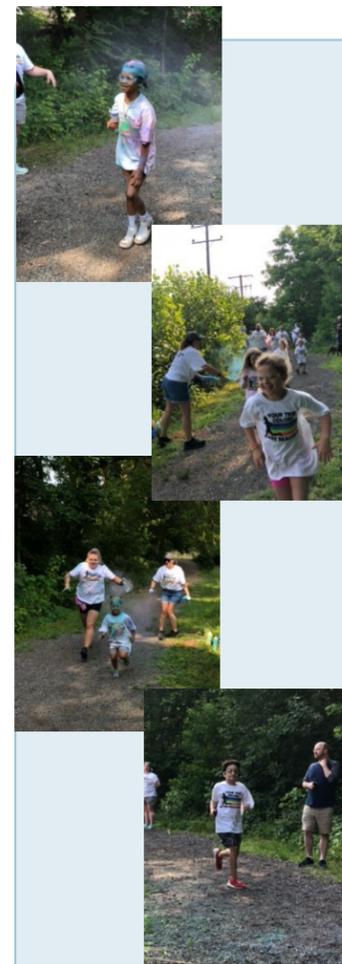
A typical work day can begin anywhere from 6:45 am to 8:00 am depending on how early my first session is and if it is out of town. I always start my day at the Streator Office gathering client documents for the sessions on the docket that day. I travel to Peru and Ottawa frequently to meet with clients for counseling sessions. Sessions with clients typically take the majority of the day, as I meet with each client for one hour weekly or biweekly. Whether my day's tasks are challenging or routine, I enjoy taking time to debrief and chat with my coworkers for a few minutes each day. By 4:00 pm, my day comes to a close and I'm out the door!

#### What support do you have in place in order to journey alongside survivors of trauma?

For me, my work would be impossible to do effectively and properly without support inside and outside of the office. Within the agency, I have regular meetings with my supervisor and debrief times with my colleagues. These work place relationships are the glue that has helped me through the particularly difficult days. Outside of work, I am thankful to have a supportive fiancé who is kind and can make me laugh when I need to breathe and have a good laugh! My faith has been an anchor since I began working with survivors of trauma. Any worries or fears I carry regarding my clients, I take to the Lord in prayer. This is the primary support of my life.

### New service: PAIP Services

We're excited to offer a Partner Abuse Intervention Program, or PAIP for short, here at Safe Journeys. This program is for persons of any gender who chose to use violence or cause harm in an intimate partner relationship. We know that domestic violence is a broad term and covers lots of different types of relationships, like parent and child, or sibling abuse; PAIP is only for persons who caused harm in their romantic relationship and had a clear cycle or goal of power and control rather than an isolated incident of reactive violence. Our groups will be offered on Monday/Thursday evenings in Pontiac and Tuesday/Wednesday evenings in Ottawa. Please call/text Mara at 815-257-1594 for more information.



**Fun at the Family Color Run on June 17 at Twister Hill Park**

### Service Spotlight: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Counselors use various therapeutic techniques with clients. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is one approach with high rates of success. CBT is an evidence-based practice used to treat an array of issues in a client's life, from relationships, sleeping, anger, anxiety and depression. CBT focuses on identifying, understanding and changing negative thinking and behavior patterns. CBT allows clients to engage in healthier thinking patterns by becoming aware of the negative and often times unrealistic thoughts that impact their feelings and moods. One CBT technique counselors use is problem solving. First clients identify a problem, create a list of possible solutions to the problem, then the strengths and weaknesses of each possible solution. Lastly, a client is encouraged to choose a solution then implement it.



Prevention educator, Erin, threw the opening pitch at the Illinois Valley Pistol Shrimp game on Monday, June 26 at Safe Journeys Night!

### Volunteer Spotlight: Julie, Intern

#### What is your role with Safe Journeys?

Julie, Intern and Sexual Assault Case Manager and Volunteer Coordinator

#### What experience do you bring to your role?

I had been working at the Shelter before I interned with the Counseling Department, so I had the onboard training and experience working with survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence. Growing up, my mom was a counselor, so I had the experience of hearing what was all involved from her perspective. As far as interning with Prevention, I had previously been a Teacher's Aide, Substitute Teacher, and Supervisor at a Traumatic Brain Injury Day Program. All those experiences helped me with preparing and presenting lessons.

#### What have you gained through your time serving with Safe Journeys?

I have gained so much knowledge and confidence. I was blessed with the best mentors, along with great support and training to enhance my knowledge and experience.

#### What would you say to someone who is interested in becoming a volunteer with Safe Journeys?

It is so rewarding to be able to be the one person that helps a client or helps our organization. It is not easy, but nothing in life is. If you do not put forth the effort, you will not be able to experience the reward!



Julie graduated from Aurora University with her MSW. Congrats, Julie!



### Safe Journeys

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*Mission:*  
We empower survivors of domestic and sexual violence and end such violence in our communities.

## 2023 Family Color Run



Thank you for all of the support we have received for our big annual fun(d)raiser!

We are so incredibly grateful for our staff and volunteers who helped make the color run a success!



58 participants  
21 sponsors  
20 volunteers  
Over \$7K raised

### Services

- 24/7 Confidential Support Line
- Emergency Shelter
- Advocacy
- Counseling
- Prevention
- Bilingual/Bicultural Services
- PAIP Services