

# YWCA IS ON A MISSION: Advocacy & Prevention



## Meet Victim Advocate Kierstin Miller & learn about the important work she takes on in the community

For some, arriving at the YWCA seeking shelter or other life-saving services can be a humbling experience filled with uncertainty and anxiety. Within our walls however, survivors of violence will find refuge and assistance as they work to rebuild their lives. At the YWCA, they have access to confidential emergency shelter for themselves and their children fleeing violence, community-based services, advocacy, and support.

During this time of crisis, many YWCA clients will require legal assistance. It is at this point in their journey that they meet Kierstin Miller, Victim Advocate with the YWCA's Wise Options.

Kierstin serves victims of crimes in Lycoming County, ensuring all victims are supported and their rights are upheld. In her role as the Victim Advocate, Kierstin is tasked with providing individual counseling services to victims regarding legal options, processes, and procedures. Her work adds additional focuses on accompaniment and support to all victims of crime in the criminal justice system, including victims who do not fall into the domestic violence or sexual assault realm.

"Being able to support and empower victims to achieve their own justice is truly the best part of my role," Kierstin said.

Kierstin spends her days providing supportive services to those who need it most. For example, she will assist with Protection From Abuse orders, divorce referrals, no trespass letters, emergency relocation services, restitution claims, and victim impact statements, just to name a few.

Even in the depths of COVID-19's impact, the YWCA Legal and Victim Advocacy Department was able to meet with 504 individuals in Lycoming County for legal services during in the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

While proper filing of paperwork is important and essential work, Kierstin's days are also spent going above and beyond for her clients.

"Getting out of an abusive relationship is not easy, but I was supported the entire way by the Wise Options staff," one survivor said. "I felt supported and comforted by the Wise Options staff, which included a Legal Advocate and a Counselor. There was no judgement, and they were available to answer questions and provide counseling services to assist my family. I can't thank them enough."

Acting as a liaison between clientele and outside agencies, Kierstin works with service partners such as North Penn Legal Services, Lycoming County Sheriff's Department, local law enforcement, the Lycoming County District Attorney's office, Lycoming County bench and bar attorneys, Lycoming County Children and Youth, Common Pleas and Magisterial Judges, and many others.

"Having strong connections with outside agencies allows for the clientele to receive the best service and a bigger safety net of support," Kierstin said.

Kierstin hopes to continue to strengthen relationships with Lycoming County's Victim/Witness Coordinators and the District Attorney's office to provide empowering services to the Victims of crime in Lycoming County.

"I hope to make a strong impact in encouraging victims to gain their voice and obtain their justice within the court system," Kierstin said.

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To learn more about Violence Prevention & Response Services offered at the YWCA Northcentral PA, please visit us online at [www.ywcawilliamsport.org](http://www.ywcawilliamsport.org). All services are free and confidential and can be accessed by calling our 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 1-800-326-8483.