

Family Violence Intervention Steering Committee Accomplishments and Emerging Issues, 1994-1997

OVERVIEW:

During the last four years, there have been several significant changes in the opportunities and challenges facing the Steering Committee and agencies that intervene in domestic violence. Domestic violence has become a more widely discussed and recognized problem in the County. This has led to an increased pressure on the existing intervention systems and an increased interest by other non-domestic violence programs in addressing the issue. However, there has not been a commensurate increase in funding for a wider array of services. In addition, several Federal and state initiatives have changed the environment in which intervention services occur.

This report attempts to list the accomplishments of the Steering Committee itself, its member organizations or of other organizations in promoting effective domestic violence intervention. In addition, it lists the emerging issues that are affecting intervention in domestic violence.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Data Collection: The Steering Committee is receiving much more consistent data, and many agencies are now flagging domestic violence cases. The Portland Police Bureau received a Byrne grant to work with the Steering Committee to ensure standardized collection and reporting of data on domestic violence. Because both Juvenile and Adult Criminal Justice Services (JACJS, was Department of Community Corrections) and the Courts utilize statewide databases, they have been unable to flag these cases. Federal law, which criminalized possession of firearms by those convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence, will require that the State Police LEDS system flag domestic violence cases.

Training for Steering Committee Members: The Steering Committee continues to provide essential information to those in the field about domestic violence, in Multnomah County and around the state. Meetings in the last two years have provided an educational format on a variety of subjects, including violence against girls, statutory rape, Federal Violence Against Women laws, Oregon Domestic Violence Council Protocols, alcohol and drug issues, issues relating to women of color, Family Law Task Force-proposed legislation, immigration laws and other topics. The Committee's UPDATE reported on these and other topics of interest. In 1995, the Committee brought Barbara Hart for training and consultation and co-sponsored a training on batterers intervention by Phyllis Frank.

Staffing for Committee: The Steering Committee now has a stable staff position. In 1994, the City and County governments provided joint funding for a Domestic Violence Coordinator. The County has increased their level of support to include a .5FTE Office Assistant, in part to reflect the increased role of the Coordinator in County projects. Funding includes publication and mailing of the UPDATE. In addition, through a County-PSU partnership agreement, two PSU student interns were hired to assist in Fatality Review and other tasks of the Coordinator.

Increase in Services and/or Funding for Services for Victims: There have been successes in both increasing services and increasing funding to support existing services. New or expanded

services include:

1. DCFS funding of translation project.
2. El Programa Hispano and Programa de Mujeres, both non-shelter based services, have developed into stable programs for battered women who speak Spanish.
3. HUD Horizon grant has significant funds (\$500,000 per year for 2.5 years) for rent assistance and leasing.
4. In 1996, Multnomah County funded (\$35,000) a position at Multnomah County Legal Aid Services to represent victims of domestic violence in civil suits.
5. D.A. VAWA Grant to provide services to underserved populations.
6. Multnomah County Department of Community and Family Services began a project to ensure screening for domestic violence and support for victims who either work in the Department or who receive services from Department staff. The Department includes Developmental Disabilities, Alcohol and Drug screening, Children and Adult Mental Health, and Child, Youth Family and Community Action.
7. Bradley-Angle House opened new short-term transitional housing, funded in part by a HUD-McKinney grant and in part by the City of Portland in 1995. Multnomah County currently is funding the City of Portland portion.
8. Both AFS and SCF have begun to screen for and provide minimal services for victims of domestic violence.
9. OCADSV with Oregon Legal Services has received funds for Americorps volunteers to work on legal advocacy. PWCL and MCLAS each have one Americorps volunteer.

Funding has increased or stabilized for several existing services to victims, including:

1. Multnomah County has picked up funding (\$183,000) for the two-year "IHIP" grant received from the Federal government, through the State. This grant provided long-term case management for women leaving emergency shelters.
2. Funding for all portions of the City of Portland's Byrne grant, which ended June, 1997, have been picked up by local government. Multnomah County is funding the shelter, legal representation, advocacy for restraining orders at the Courthouse, and intensive services for victims. See below for more information about criminal justice portions.

Improvements in Criminal and Civil Justice System: Various steps were taken to improve intervention by law enforcement agencies and other parts of the criminal justice system.

Improvements include:

1. Development of protocols by Oregon Domestic Violence Council (ODVC) for a variety of fields, including Courts, Mediation and Batterers Intervention Programs. FVISC members were members of ODVC and/or worked on developing the protocols.
 - a) Community Corrections used the Batterers Intervention Program Standards in their request for proposals for County-funded services to DSP offenders. Transition Projects, Inc. and El Programa Hispano have started groups, using these standards.
 - b) The 1997 State Legislature included the ODVC Mediation standards in legislation requiring Courts to establish mediation in civil suits relating to dissolution, custody and visitation.
2. Gresham Police Dept. started a Domestic Violence Unit on July 1, 1997, that will include

comprehensive training for all officers. This unit is funded by a Federal VAWA grant written with assistance from FVISC staff.

3. OSP has developed training curriculum for officers.
4. Portland Police Bureau (PPB) Domestic Violence Reduction Unit (DVRU) continues to train PPB officers, including a 2 hour training at Advanced Academy and training of all new recruits for one week (40 hours). "Beyond Arrest" study at PSU is evaluating the DVRU; results are expected late in 1997 or early 1998. The Portland Police Bureau fully funded an Hispanic Advocate. This position had originally been partially funded by the City of Portland Byrne Grant.
5. FVISC members were able to assist in getting an agreement to keep perpetrators in jail (not releasing them on "recog" or due to census or matrix release).
6. Adult Community Justice Services has grown since 1993 to seven Probation Officers, plus other staff. They will be picking up many more domestic violence cases, including VRO's, Deferred Sentencing Project (DSP), revocations of DSP, misdemeanors and felony cases.
7. OCADSV completed and published a report on a Courtwatch of restraining order hearings in Multnomah County. The report has resulted in some slight changes in judicial behavior.
8. Multnomah County Court has implemented new RO petition forms which more easily allow petitioners to request and judges to indicate specific items, such restraint from contact, temporary custody, requirement to turn in guns.
9. A small group of criminal court judges have met informally with FVISC members and staff to discuss possible changes in system. The group has made several recommendations and will meet again to figure out how to proceed.

Promote Community Ethos That Domestic Violence Will No Longer Be Tolerated: The Steering Committee has traditionally been involved in the October Public Awareness Campaign. Due to these and other efforts, there has been a significant increase in the level of awareness of domestic violence in Multnomah County. There are a variety of indications of this increased awareness:

1. The City Club of Portland has released an excellent report on domestic violence. Members of the Steering Committee provided testimony and consultation to the City Club Committee working on the report.
2. Multnomah County Department of Community and Family Services (DCFS) and the Oregon Health Systems in Collaboration (OHSIC) have developed models to provide support for employers. The DCFS model will be expanded over the next two years to encompass all of Multnomah County employees. The Portland Rotary Club Domestic Violence Committee is interested in developing materials and training for employers. Steering Committee members or staff have been instrumental in developing these projects.
3. Health Department released report on violence in Multnomah County, which demonstrated the high level of domestic violence and that fact that it is 30-40% of all reported violent crime.
4. There have been several significant changes in Federal law on domestic violence, including additional funding for victim services and criminal justice response, better enforcement of "foreign" RO's, laws prohibiting the possession of guns in various situations relating to

domestic violence.

5. At the State level, there have been several changes, including upgrading misdemeanor IV assaults in domestic violence cases to felonies under certain conditions, designation of a portion of the Unitary Crime Assessment Fee to domestic violence, and required use of ODVC Mediation standards for Court mandated mediation.
6. The 1993 Legislature required the formation of Local Public Safety Coordinating Councils (LPSCC) to implement HB1145. In Multnomah County, the role of the LPSCC has been enlarged to a model more like the Steering Committee to coordinate a larger public safety agenda and to include community members and groups. Staff to Steering Committee is a member of the LPSCC.
7. Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) has started a project to raise funds from individuals for shelter/victim programs.

EMERGING ISSUES:

During the summer of 1997, the Steering Committee identified several, important emerging issues, which have or will have an impact on intervention in domestic violence.

Criminal Justice Issues:

1. The formation of Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) provides a structure to address domestic violence at a higher level in the relevant criminal justice system agency. Domestic violence can be addressed there in ways which are more integrated into general crime response. The work of the LPSCC evaluation committee and data standards committee should allow better tracking of domestic violence cases and possibly afford an opportunity to evaluate the current response to domestic violence. So far, LPSCC has generally ignored domestic violence as a significant public safety concern.
2. Measures 11 and 47 and HB1145 are sapping funding for resources for victims, because the need for more jail beds and cuts in County and City general funds. In addition, they are creating jail overcrowding, long lines and/or the inability to book offenders in jail overnight. There is concern about whether police will be able to or willing to enforce the mandatory arrest law. The injunction on the jail regarding maximum number of inmates has recently been lifted due to an increase of 200 beds. There may be an agreement that despite "being full" the jail will accept domestic violence offenders, even if they are temporarily not booking other offenders.
3. Reported violent crime in Portland is down 12%; however reported domestic violence crimes have remained steady and comprise 30% of all violent crime.
4. Federal and State governments have passed laws that sanction offenders for violation of restraining orders or possession of firearms. There is some confusion/difficulty in enforcing these laws in Oregon. These new laws will require police and Court training.
5. Police officers are still sending inappropriate people for restraining orders.
6. Poor quality of police reports hinder prosecution of offenders.
7. The Portland Police Bureau has moved the DVRU to the Child Abuse Team, which means the loss of a Captain directly over that Unit. DVRU had changed their mode of operation 2-3 years ago, so that they are attempting to call back all victims, rather than work a smaller number of cases more intensely.
8. There are three new judges allocated to Multnomah County District Court. This may provide

us with a small window of opportunity to develop a misdemeanor domestic violence docket or to provide restraining order hearings in Gresham or on an emergency basis.

9. Adult Community Justice Services are under pressure to move domestic violence misdemeanor cases to a case bank, and have moved certain misdemeanors to a modified case bank.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee has now been meeting for over 10 years, and has grown from a monthly attendance of 15-20 people to 25-35 people. More community organizations have joined (and some have drifted away). Meetings have shifted from being a problem solving body to a more formal educational body. There is a need to establish a way to recover the problem-solving function so that agencies can discuss specific cases and concerns. There has been some loss of staff time over the last year to other County/community projects, and the City of Portland no longer equally shares the cost of even 50% of the current staffing.

The Steering Committee also needs to become more representative of the community and more diverse in its membership and in the people who attend from member agencies. There is a concern about the lack of involvement of the criminal justice system specially from the Court and judges. FVISC has lost several important members, including Judge Stephen Herrell. The Governor's Task Force, which replaced Oregon Domestic Violence Council, has no active Steering Committee members.

Family Values/Social Pressure: "Family Values" rhetoric has creating an environment in which it is more difficult for victims to leave an abusive situation. Legislation has passed whose intent is to make it more difficult to obtain a divorce under the guise of family values or family preservation. New "friendly parent" legislation will force some women to lose custody or to maintain contact with an abusive ex-spouse. State mandate for mediation services also requires the involvement of the Steering Committee or some of its members in their development.

Federal funding for Legal Services disallows the use of specific funding to assist in dissolution cases. Welfare reform legislation, which creates time limits adds to the pressure domestic violence survivors already feel (this has been mitigated by the 1997 Legislature that mandates Adult Family Services to exempt domestic violence victims from timelines). It has become increasingly difficult to articulate the need for widespread changes in the role and status of women in order to eliminate domestic violence.

Need/Funding for victim Services: There has been an increase in awareness of domestic violence, but not adequate growth in the domestic violence intervention system to respond to the increased request for services, especially for emerging populations and issues.

In general, funding has not kept up with the need. At the Federal level, budget reductions to HUD, McKinney and Byrne grants, as well as Welfare Reform legislation, are making separation from an abuser more difficult. Locally, the City of Portland and Multnomah County have been able to maintain almost all of the funding for domestic violence victims services, despite Measure 47 cuts. However, the non-shelter services funding (\$225,000) was lost due to Department of Community and Family Services (DCFS) inability to release the RFP in a timely

manner. Adult Community Justice Women's Transition Services has been disbanded and programs moved to branch offices. The school funding crisis has creating cuts in Counselors/ Child Development Specialists who work to support kids all year long. This leaves children who view No Punching Judy with no follow-up services. A significant portion of funds for intervention with prostituted women were cut from both the Juvenile and Adult Community Justice Services and Bureau of Housing and Community Development budgets. On the positive side, Violence Against Women Act, Unitary Crime Assessment Fees and Victim Of Crime Assistance funds are increasing.

In addition, issues faced by agency staff are more complex and require substantial training and intensive work with clients. Meanwhile, funders are requiring outcome measures to evaluate agencies. This is creating pressures on staff and the agency itself, because of the need for additional record-keeping and the fact that outcomes in a particular case are so dependent on other factors. Small agencies may be having a more difficult time surviving in comparison to larger agencies. Larger agencies that have not previously done domestic violence intervention are now moving into the field. This requires collaboration, training and communication with agencies who do not have expertise in the area of domestic violence, and who may not seek out consultation with existing domestic violence programs. They are also seen as a threat to funding streams for existing domestic violence programs.

Now more than ever victim services are dealing with complex family issues which range from domestic violence, substance abuse, housing, special learning needs for children, and unemployment. Instead of each family having 2-3 barriers to address, they seek help with 5-6 problems. These complex, multi-level problems indicate a need for collaboration with other non-domestic violence programs, to include cross training, assessment, intervention by them, and collaboration on specific cases. Emerging issues that require more services and training include:

1. services for women battered by teenage children;
2. changes in immigration law which threatens women with the deportation of either themselves or the abuser;
3. encouragement by the State Office for Services for Children and Families to report when a child has witnessed domestic violence;
4. Legislature's requirement that AFS assess for domestic violence and to provide support;
5. violence against girls, including date rape, dating violence, sexual harassment or statutory rape
6. increasing level of poverty among single women with children, especially women of color.

The County Department of Community and Family Services has taken over responsibility for administering and contracting all domestic violence victim services (the City will no long do any contracting). There is a need to define role of FVISC and Domestic Violence Coordinator in planning for victim services. The place of domestic violence intervention needs to be clarified as the County pursues "Community Building."

Community Awareness: Despite the vast increase in public awareness about domestic violence; there are several on-going barriers to effective education:

1. It is increasingly difficult to articulate the need for changes in the social context in which domestic violence occurs, not just the need for changes in the behavior of individual batterers or survivors.
2. The media gives more coverage to shelters for animals than to shelters for survivors of domestic violence. It is difficult to advertise success stories as a group or as individuals, without succumbing to the media's drive for excitement and gore.
3. Although there is more support to incorporate prevention of domestic and sexual violence in school curriculum; there is no accepted standardized curriculum.
4. There is a need to incorporate the special issues of dating/domestic violence/sexual assault into existing school-based violence reduction or mediation.