

Working Together Against Domestic Violence

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Brief Description:

This session will help you learn how to bring together entities into a model for communication and coordination of services benefiting survivors of domestic violence. You will leave this session knowing how to develop collaboration and coordinated community response strategies within local and statewide communities, how to look for partnering entities, and how to recruit pro bono attorneys and community volunteers to assist in this mission.

Topical Outline:

- I. The problem of domestic violence and how the panelists' programs and/or partnerships are designed to serve survivors.
 - a. Example: Michigan
 - i. In a 1996 statewide survey¹ of women aged 18-69 found that:
 1. 12% of women sustained at least one form of violence perpetrated by a man.
 2. Since age 16, over half (58%) of Michigan women experienced some type of violence by a man.
 3. Women were more likely to sustain violence by someone they knew (52%) than by strangers (35%).
 4. Over one-third (38%) of women who had ever had a partner had experienced some type of partner violence.
 5. One out of five (21%) women with current partners reported sustaining some type of violence in that relationship.
 6. 38% of women have experienced physical violence by a man since age 16.
 7. 40% of women have experienced some form of sexual violence, ranging from unwanted touching to forcible rape, since the age of 16.
 8. 5,466 forcible rapes were reported in Michigan in 1996. Nationally, it is estimated that half or fewer of all attempted and completed rapes are reported to police.² The level of reporting may vary by state.

¹ Michigan Department of Community Health, Community Public Health Agency, Survey of Violence in the Lives of Michigan Women, 1996.

² U.S. Department of Justice, 1996 Crime in the United States.

9. From October 1999 to September 2000, domestic violence programs in Michigan received 61,039 crisis calls, an average of 167 crisis calls per day, and sheltered 13,624 women and children. During the same year, 2,906 victims were denied access to shelter due to lack of space.
 10. Almost 5,000 rapes and attempted rapes were reported to Michigan law enforcement agencies in 2000.
- b. Examples of programs designed to serve this need.
- i. South Jersey Legal Services
 1. SJLS work with the Domestic Violence Shelters
 - a. Formal affiliation with each shelter.
 - b. SJLS attorneys and paralegals make presentations at shelters.
 - c. Shelter Court Advocate works closely with SJLS staff.
 - d. SJLS staff participates in 40 domestic violence trainings by conducting the legal training component.
 - e. SJLS is a resource for legal assistance for shelter clients.
 2. SJLS work with Rutgers Law School
 - a. Formal affiliation agreement with University.
 - b. Rutgers domestic violence court advocacy program provides information and referral for domestic violence survivors.
 - c. Rutgers assists in recruitment and training of pro bono counsel.
 - i. The academic program has domestic violence courses that prepare students to represent victims.
 - ii. Rutgers has a domestic violence clinic.
 - iii. Students can opt to continue as Pro Bono Attorneys beyond law school.
 - iv. The school does training for attorneys and students on representation in domestic violence cases.
 - v. SJLS staff participates in Rutgers classes as adjunct faculty and guest lecturers.
 - d. SJLS screens clients for representation and refers them to pro bono counsel and to in-house staff.
 - e. SJLS recruits Rutgers students as interns, externs, and paid/volunteer clerks.
 3. SJLS works closely with the Prosecutor's office
 - a. SJLS is a referral resource for civil legal representation.
 - b. Prosecutor's office provides victim witness advocates to support victims in criminal prosecutions.

- c. Prosecutor's office administers the Victim of Crimes Compensation Fund, a resource for victims.
 - d. Prosecutor's office provides 911 phones.
 - e. SJLS works closely with victim advocates from the prosecutor's office on all issues, including weapon seizures and violations.
 - 4. SJLS participates in Domestic Violence community as a whole.
 - a. SJLS participates in domestic violence working groups in counties.
 - b. SJLS provides training and technical assistance to crisis team volunteers.
 - c. SJLS works with police departments through CIT team trainings and working groups.
 - 5. Future Expansion
 - a. SJLS is providing seed funding for Rutgers to develop a clinic to handle appeals.
 - b. SJLS provides an additional resource for representation in conflict cases through the Center for Law and Social Justice.
 - c. SJLS is developing a more formal program with the Young Lawyers section of the local bar association for pro bono representation of domestic violence survivors in all civil legal issues.
- ii. Pro Bono Project for Domestic Violence (Michigan)
 - 1. In collaboration with the State Bar of Michigan, this project is designed to recruit, train and mentor attorneys willing to take domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking cases on a pro bono basis.
 - 2. Involves a statewide training.
 - 3. In exchange for the attorney's pro bono declaration, they receive free training, materials and technical assistance from the Civil Justice Project attorney at the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. The materials and technical assistance include:
 - a. Sample briefs;
 - b. Sample pleadings;
 - c. Technical assistance papers; and
 - d. Ongoing legal research and updates on case law, court rules and pending/recently enacted legislation.
 - 4. A variety of legal service providers are involved in the project, including the private bar, bar associations, judges, DV and SA service providers, the Michigan Judicial Institute, and LEXIS/NEXIS.

II. Community partnerships – why are they successful in the context of domestic violence support?

- a. Intervention is most successful when various community agencies respond consistently and in coordination with each other. If these entities operate independently, there will be gaps in service and response.

III. Creating successful community partnerships – what steps should a program/community take to create this type of program in their area?

- a. Aim high in the hierarchies of community systems and key agencies when recruiting members for a collaborative body.
- b. Look within your community for resources in the form of experts who will volunteer time and others who will donate goods or money.
- c. Build into any project a process by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.
- d. Be cognizant of past struggles with the development of sustainable pro bono programs and innovations that have been used to overcome these struggles.

- i. Examples of past struggles:

1. Lack of dedicated staff time to maintain contact with interested attorneys and establish contact with new attorneys.
2. Lack of staff time to fully develop a program with ongoing, structured outreach, training and technical assistance components.
3. Lack of attorneys who are interested in taking cases that really need to be taken.
4. Inability to expand the cadre of pro bono attorneys beyond a loyal few.
5. Competition with other legal aid programs seeking attorneys to volunteer their time.

- ii. Examples of innovations:

1. Women Empowered Against Violent Environments (WEAVE) in Washington, DC
 - a. Provides holistic legal and counseling services to battered women in an urban area.
 - b. Develops a connection with law firms through the placement of interested attorneys who have taken cases on the board.
 - c. Reaches out to firms at different times during the year with opportunities for staff and attorneys to mix and mingle socially and provide non-legal support to get to know the agency overall.
 - d. Identifies ways to maximize the minimal time of pro bono counsel and the needs of clients.
 - i. Weekly drop-in clinic staffing.
 - e. Connects case intake function and case placement function and regularizes contact with pro bono attorneys.
 - i. The intake attorney sends out weekly email messages to pro bono attorneys who have

expressed an interest in taking a pro bono case.

2. Women's Law Project in Austin, Texas
 - a. Provides statewide legal advice, counsel and representation to batter women – largely rural.
 - b. Statewide toll-free legal advice line for batter women. Staff connects callers with attorneys in the caller's geographic area who have committed to providing limited no cost counseling.
3. The Spring of Tampa, Florida, and Mike Bedke of Piper Rudnick
 - a. Local shelter-based programs in need of legal assistance.
 - b. Board membership develops into relationship including assistance with real estate deal, zoning issues and development of a rural outreach program.
 - c. Lawyers provide non-legal support and assistance which leads to legal assistance for agency so they can better server their clients.
 - d. Increased financial support.

iii. To sum:

1. Non-legal assistance from attorneys can evolve into a long-standing commitment including legal services.
2. Think beyond the standard "placement of cases" model.
3. Expand the practice areas that you can integrate into your needs for legal services.
4. Get to know each other better through non-traditional ways.

- IV. Recruiting attorney/community volunteers – how does a program maintain a qualified volunteer base?
 - a. Market the program.
 - i. Publish announcements and registration forms in appropriate journals and newsletters.
 - ii. Send email blasts to membership list serves of appropriate groups.
 - iii. Direct mailings.
 - iv. Radio and television interviews.
 - b. Train volunteers to be effective domestic violence advocates.
 - c. Continue to provide support once volunteers have been trained.
- V. Maintaining a successful collaboration/partnership once established.
 - a. Institutionalize involvement with other partners.
 - i. Create an internal system for input and feedback, such as list serves and task forces.
 - b. Recruit new partners when appropriate.

Bibliography & Website Links:

1. www.lsnj.org

2. www.mcadsv.org
3. www.mrcdsv.org
4. www.michigan.gov
5. <http://courts.Michigan.gov/mji>
6. <http://www.abanet.org/domviol/home.html>