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Marriage Promotion: For Better or for Worse What is a Domestic Violence Advocate to Do?

By Ann Menard

This following articles on Marriage Promotion by Ann Menard were reprinted with permission from the publication entitled, "Marriage Promotion: For Better or for Worse," A-Files, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, April 2003.

Background

For the past three years, there has been growing debate in state and federal policy circles about whether the government should be involved in efforts to promote marriage. In fact, the 1996 welfare reform law passed by Congress referenced marriage and family formation in three of its four purpose statements: states were to design welfare programs to promote marriage (along with job preparation and work), reduce out-of-wedlock childbearing, and "encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families." These family formation provisions received little attention at the time, and states have used almost all of their federal and state welfare program funds since then to provide cash assistance, child care, and work programs.

Since 2000, President Bush has made marriage promotion a significant focus of his Administration, and the House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 4 that largely incorporates the Administration's proposals, including a mandate that all states establish marriage promotion programs and authorization of over \$300 million per year in funding for such programs. (See page 6 for more about H.R. 4). The Senate has yet to complete its welfare reauthorization process, but is expected to

include at least some of these marriage promotion provisions in its welfare reauthorization bill.

Given the diversity of family structures in this country—some formed by choice, some by necessity—serious questions remain about the potential consequences of proposals to provide incentives, whether programmatic or financial, for those in a certain type of "family." While we can certainly agree on the importance of ensuring that all children have caring, financially stable adults in their lives, this has not lead to a consensus that government-sponsored programs to promote marriage, particularly among low-income, single-parent families, are either appropriate or likely to be successful.

What is this thing called "marriage promotion?"—The devil is in the details

Here's how the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) introduces its recent publication, *Strengthening Healthy Marriages: A Compendium of Approaches*:

Recognizing not only changing social forces but also the enduring benefits of marriage, state and local governments, faith-based institutions, non-profit organizations and

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*businesses are developing innovative approaches to promoting safe and stable marriages. These approaches range from changing welfare rules to developing marriage education programs to community organizing and media and education campaigns.*¹

In fact, “marriage promotion and family formation” initiatives encompass an extremely broad range of activities and programs, from setting forth numerical goals to increase marriage rates or decrease divorce, to developing state-wide public education campaigns promoting marriage, to reforming marriage and divorce laws (including advocating against no-fault divorce), to promoting marriage- and family-friendly employment policies, to funding couples and marriage education programs. These initiatives may specifically target poor families and low-income communities or have a broader focus. Some explicitly involve partnerships with religious and faith communities, such as those in which religious leaders pledge to require premarital counseling for any couple they marry, while others involve partnerships with schools or businesses. Some promote marriage *per se* as an anti-poverty strategy while others have a broader “child well-being” framework. Almost none of these programs have been evaluated and their effectiveness remains unproven.²

Less controversial are approaches focusing on strengthening family stability, including efforts to reduce teen pregnancy, increase income and other supports to low-income working families, provide in-home visitation programs, increase the employment opportunities of low-income fathers, and strengthen child support enforcement. Interestingly, there *are* research findings that suggest that enhancing economic security in these ways can strengthen marriage and reduce the rate of divorce.³

Administration officials and legislative leaders at the federal and state level have routinely affirmed the position that government policies or programs

designed to encourage marriage should not trap women in abusive relationships, withdraw support from single mothers, or force women into unwanted, unhealthy relationships. In response to early criticism, federal legislative proposals now refer to “healthy marriages.” Despite these assurances and language modifications, however, there remains considerable concern among domestic violence advocates and others about the nature and impact of these government marriage promotion initiatives.

Why is government marriage promotion so controversial?

This is not a debate about the relative benefits to children of growing up in healthy stable families—whether with married biological parents or not—or how best to end poverty. Rather, the question is: Is it the government’s business to promote marriage? There is general agreement that we should eliminate policy-based financial disincentives for couples to marry or penalties against low-income married couples (so-called “marriage penalties”). There is also agreement about the need for well-designed programs to assist parents and couples develop the skills they need to develop and sustain healthy relationships with each other and their children. What remains in deep dispute, however, is the role that federal and state government should play, if any, in promoting marriage or preventing divorce.

The Bush Administration and others argue that the research on child poverty and child well-being provides clear and irrefutable support for government-sponsored marriage promotion activities as part of anti-poverty efforts. They insist that government has not only a pivotal role, but also an important self-interest, in providing states the “knowledge and tools to implement successful marriage and family formation policies.”⁴

Opponents of government-sponsored marriage promotion charge that these initiatives:

Marriage Promotion: For Better or For Worse (continued)

- intrude on fundamentally private decisions;
- divert federal and state welfare funds away from the provision of basic economic supports;
- fly in the face of public opinion; and
- place women with abusive partners or ex-partners at increased risk.

Other critics point to the lack of evidence that these programs are effective in reducing poverty, building healthy relationships and stable families, or responding adequately to issues such as domestic and sexual violence and child abuse.⁵

Poll after poll shows that most Americans are against the government's involvement in personal decisions regarding marriage and oppose the use of scarce public dollars to promote marriage among the poor. While those with a high level of religious commitment are more likely to favor these programs, fully two-thirds (66 percent) in that category do not want the government to get involved.⁶ As Avis Jones-DeWeever of the Institute for Women's Policy Research puts it, "One of the most private, personal, and critical decisions one makes in life is if, when, and whom one should marry. It seems the ultimate in big government, if not social engineering, to have public policy anywhere near these critical life-altering decisions."⁷

Some feel that marriage *per se* is being promoted as a simplistic solution to the complex problems facing poor families and argue that "Prodding couples into matrimony without helping them solve problems that make relationships precarious could leave them worse off. . . . Unemployment, low wages, and poverty discourage family formation and erode family stability, making it less likely that individuals will marry in the first place and more likely that their marriages will deteriorate."⁸ Theodora Ooms from the Center on Law and Social Policy writes, "Marrying a low-income unmarried mother to her child's father will not magically raise the family out of poverty when parents often have

no skills, no jobs, and terrible housing, and may be struggling with depression, substance abuse, or domestic violence."⁹

Or as a coalition of religious leaders recently wrote to members of the U.S. Senate: "Marriage is a social institution, but it is not a social prescription. It is not a panacea for systematic social problems. The substitution of marriage for responsible and meaningful social programs obscures the political and economic issues involved, and puts a price on the unique nature of a marriage covenant."¹⁰

There are also concerns about the values and beliefs that frame some of the current marriage promotion initiatives. Many women's and civil rights advocates remain deeply skeptical of the conservative ideology that appears to undergird much of the most fervent advocacy of this pro-marriage agenda and raise a troubling set of questions—What kinds of "marriages" and "relationships" are being promoted? How are we defining "healthy family"? What are the implications of defining "healthy family" in only one way? And only through one cultural lens? Are we devaluing the "healthy family" that consists of a mom and her children or one that involves an extended family support network or two loving parents of the same gender?

Will marriage promotion activities have the unintended (or intended consequence) of stigmatizing single parents or single-headed households? (James Q. Wilson, author of *The Marriage Problem*, actually recommends stigmatizing single parents as a marriage promotion strategy.¹¹) Clearly, stigmatizing divorce or making divorce more difficult to obtain will de facto make it more difficult for some women to leave a violent relationship. In promoting marriage, are some also championing the return of rigid, patriarchal gender roles that have in fact left many women economically vulnerable and increased their risk for abuse?

Marriage Promotion: For Better or For Worse (continued)

There are also questions about how and by whom the “success” of these programs will be measured. Will the value of these initiatives be defined by how the number of marriages or divorces increase or decrease? Shouldn’t we be more concerned about the quality of relationships, regardless of structure, and their capacity to provide nurturing environments for children and safety for all family members? Shouldn’t we count as a success a decision not to marry after a pre-marital course helped someone recognize abuse or incompatibility? Or the decision to divorce an abusive husband?

“Do No Harm”—Reducing Risks to Battered Women and Their Children

Despite the objections raised by various advocacy groups, including domestic violence organizations, and the lack of public support, there remains strong bipartisan support in Congress for marriage promotion as a policy priority. It is widely expected that some aspects of the Administration’s marriage promotion agenda, including grants to support state and local initiatives, will be included as part of the 2003 welfare reauthorization bill.

At the state level, while there are certainly higher levels of skepticism about government involvement in marriage promotion, there is also considerable interest and activity. Reflecting that interest, the National Governors Association and National Conference of State Legislators have increased the technical assistance they provide to their state constituents around these issues.

As the marriage promotion debate continues to move through Congress (and increasingly, to the states), advocates working on the federal level have identified several areas in which “protective language” is necessary to mitigate the potential harm of these legislative proposals. These types of protective provisions will be equally important on the state level.

There must be no coercion, economic or otherwise, with respect to any family formation efforts.

Participation in any type of family formation programs must be voluntary and without threat of penalty for nonparticipation. It must be recognized that financial incentives are a form of coercion for desperately poor women and such incentives must never be offered to entice women to marry or remain in difficult or dangerous relationships.

There must be no discrimination against children or families due to the marital status of the parent.

No child or parent should ever be discriminated against or disadvantaged because of the marital status of the parent or because of the parent’s refusal to participate in a marriage promotion program. Nontraditional families should be respected.

States (and local communities) must not be required to spend welfare program funds or other money on marriage promotion programs.

Alternative approaches to enhancing child well-being and strengthening families should also be supported.

Domestic violence issues must be addressed in any family formation initiatives funded by the government.

Many women are victimized by the fathers of their children and are in need of protection *from* them, not increased contact *with* them. To ensure that intimate violence is appropriately addressed and guarded against in any family formation program—whether focused on strengthening relationships, improving parenting skills, promoting responsible fatherhood, or supporting strong and healthy families—grantees should be required to consult or contract with state and local domestic violence programs (unless the grantee itself has demonstrated such expertise).

Marriage Promotion: For Better or For Worse (continued)

Family formation initiatives must be carefully evaluated, with particular attention to unintended negative consequences.

Advocates working on the federal level continue to remind policy makers that there are currently more non-marital families than married families in America. These include single, separated, divorced, widowed, cohabitating, gay and lesbian, and extended families, among others. If enhanced child well-being is the primary goal, what is being done to help children when their parents have good reasons not to be married? We continue to urge Congress to avoid coercing low-income individuals into one type of family structure. Instead, Congress should be concerned about supporting the economic security and well-being of all families, regardless of how they are constituted.

¹U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, *Strengthening Healthy Marriages: A Compendium of Approaches*. (August 2002), at 5. www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/region2/index.htm.

²See Gardiner, K., Fishman, M., Nikolov P., Laud, S., & Glosser, A. (March 2002). *State Policies to Promote Marriage, Preliminary Report*. Submitted by the Lewin Group. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/hspparent.htm;
Ooms, T. and Parke, M. (October 2002) More than a Dating Service? State Activities Designed to Strengthen and Promote Marriage. *CLASP Policy Brief, Couples and Marriage Series, 2, 1-8* http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/Pubs_Couples;
Coontz, S. & Folbre, N. (2002). Marriage, Poverty, and Public Policy. *The American Prospect*, 13 (7). www.prospect.org/print-friendly/webfeatures/2002/03/coontz-s-03-19.html.

³See Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), Chapter 6. www.mdrc.org/Reports2000/MFIP/MFIP-Vol-1-Adult.pdf.

⁴See Testimony of HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson before the Senate Finance Committee (March 12, 2003) at 10. finance.senate.gov/sitepages/hearing031203.htm.

⁵See Leiwant, S. (March 12, 2003), Testimony submitted to Senate Finance Committee. www.nowdef.org/html/issues/wel/marriagepromotion.shtml.

⁶The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Americans Struggle with Religion's Role at Home and Abroad*, at 3, (March 20, 2002).

⁷Jones-DeWeever, A. (June 2002). Marriage Promotion and Low-Income Communities: An Examination of Real Needs and Real Solutions. *A Briefing Paper of the Institute for Women's Policy Research*. www.iwpr.org (under PDF reports).

⁸Coontz, S. & Folbre, N. (2002). Marriage, Poverty, and Public Policy. *The American Prospect*, 13 (7). www.prospect.org/print-friendly/webfeatures/2002/03/coontz-s-03-19.html.

⁹Ooms, T. (2002). Marriage Plus. *The American Prospect*, 13 (7). www.prospect.org/print-friendly/print/V13/7/ooms-t.html.

¹⁰From letter to Senate Finance Committee (March 27, 2003), signed by American Friends Service Committee, Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church, Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office, National Council of Jewish Women, Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries.

¹¹Wilson, J. Q. (2002). Interview on PBS as part of "Let's Get Married" special report. www.pbs.org/wqbh/pages/frontline/shows/marriage/interviews/wilson.html.

ODVN's New Contact Information:

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www.odvn.org**

The Marriage Promotion Proposals of H.R. 4

- Anne Menard

H.R. 4 mandates that all states establish marriage promotion programs and “set specific, numerical, and measurable performance objectives” for promoting married families (Sec. 115) and authorizes the use of over \$300 million in federal and state welfare/TANF funds for the following types of marriage promotion activities (Sec. 103 and 115):

- Public advertising campaigns on the value of marriage and the skills needed to increase marital stability and health.
- Education in high schools on the value of marriage, relationship skills, and budgeting.
- Marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs, that may include parenting skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and job and career advancement, for non-married pregnant women and non-married expectant fathers.
- Pre-marital education and marriage skills training for engaged couples and for couples or individuals interested in marriage.
- Marriage enhancement and marriage skills training programs for married couples.
- Divorce reduction programs that teach relationship skills.
- Marriage mentoring programs which use married couples as role models and mentors in at-risk communities.
- Programs to reduce the disincentives to marriage in means-tested aid programs, if offered in conjunction with any activity described above.

An additional \$20 million per year is authorized “to promote and support involved, committed, and responsible fatherhood, and to encourage and support healthy marriages” (Sec. 119).

What's an Advocate to Do?

The Need for Woman-Defined Policy Advocacy

By Anne Menard

Responding to the complex issues raised by government marriage promotion initiatives will require critical and strategic thinking by domestic violence advocates, and policy advocacy informed by the needs and concerns of battered women in diverse communities. Marriage promotion is likely to be one of the very few areas (aside from Homeland Security and possibly faith-based initiatives) in which deficit-ridden states and localities will be seeing new federal monies in the next couple of years. States and local communities are already positioning themselves for these “new” marriage promotion monies, establishing marriage task forces, working groups, and funding pilot projects. How state coalitions and local domestic violence programs place themselves within this marriage promotion debate may well determine the direction these initiatives take.

Here are some critical thinking questions to get you started:

What marriage promotion initiatives are currently underway in your state or community? Check your state’s website. Ask legislative and community leaders: What funding streams are being used to support the marriage promotion activities? What are the purposes and expected outcomes of any marriage promotion activities currently underway or likely to be proposed? What people and values are driving these initiatives? To what extent, if any, do they currently address domestic violence issues? To what extent are family support activities culturally relevant and accessible to immigrants and those with limited English proficiency?¹

The Need for Woman-Defined Policy Advocacy (continued)

What do the battered women you work with and for think about these marriage promotion activities? Be concrete. Would any of the programs described in H.R. 4 (see page 6) potentially place battered women as a group or individual battered women in increased danger? What are the specific risks and are there ways that these risks can be mitigated? Also, explore any positive impacts specific programs might have for some battered women (for example, women who want the relationship to continue, want their partner or ex-partner to be involved in their children's lives, and struggle with the question of whether that is possible without ongoing risk to themselves or their children). Ask women if any of these programs might have been helpful to them, if available earlier in their relationship, and what would have made them helpful.²

What role do you (state coalition and local programs) want to play in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating marriage promotion activities using federal or state marriage promotion monies? What is your agency's capacity to do this new work? What opportunities are there for you or allies to influence the direction of marriage promotion activities in your state? Who else is likely to be involved and will they welcome or resist your participation? Will you want to apply for any of these funds directly or as part of a collaborative project? For example, could you use this funding to develop or expand dating violence prevention programs or ongoing efforts to help young children learn the importance of nonviolence? To what extent do you need to educate policy leaders, the public, and the media about marriage promotion issues and concerns?

How will you ensure that there are safe opportunities to disclose domestic violence in any programs directed at parents, couples

or families, and that participation in these programs is voluntary and informed? As we have learned in other areas (such as with the use of mediation and pre-divorce parenting classes), it is critical to ensure that domestic violence is safely and routinely identified and appropriately addressed by well-trained personnel without a vested interest in an individual's decision whether or not to participate in the program.

What additional information and support do you need, and from whom? The real challenge for domestic violence coalitions and programs will be to ensure that federal and state "family formation" funding is used for programs and activities that indeed support the development of healthy and safe families rather than increase risks to battered women and their children. Clearly, on yet another front, we have our work cut out for us.

¹See for instance TANF Reauthorization: Effects on Asian and Pacific Islander Families. (October 2002). *A Policy Paper of the Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence*.

²See Davies, J. (1999). Introduction to Policy Advocacy and Analysis: Improving How Systems Respond to Domestic Violence. *Building Comprehensive Solutions to Domestic Violence*, a project of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. www.vawnet.org.

Anne Menard has been an activist working with battered women and sexual assault survivors for the past 25 years. She is currently a Senior Advisor to the Domestic Violence Resource Center Network, as well as a private consultant providing a full range of technical assistance and training expertise on policy and practice issues to non-profit and public agencies engaged in efforts to end violence against women. She can be reached at amenard@epix.net. The articles on Marriage Promotion in this issue drew heavily from the ongoing analysis of the policy advocates at the National Network to End Domestic Violence, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Family Violence Prevention Fund, and NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund. The views expressed in these articles are those of the author and should not be attributed to organizations with which she is affiliated.



Financial Tip from our Financial Manager

Rita Doyle Smith

Gifts in Kind International works with corporate donors and non-profit organizations to provide a variety of low-cost products to non-profits. Such products include Micro-soft, Intuit, and Symantec software, office supplies and equipment from 3M, Staples, and Xerox, building materials from Lowe's and Home Depot, household items from a variety of companies, and a whole lot more. Here's how it works...

Go to giftsinkind.org and download an application. Complete the form and submit the required documentation that you are a 501(c)(3) charity serving the ill, needy, and/or youth (a pretty broad category). Mail it in, along with a check for the annual fee of \$125. After a few weeks of processing, you will receive a registration number and can begin receiving information about available products. When you decide to order a product, you will pay a small administrative fee.

An example of the savings – we recently purchased Microsoft Office XP Professional for \$63 and Intuit Quickbooks Pro for \$15.

For more information, go to giftsinkind.org or call Rita at 614-781-9651 x223.

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The ODVN Clearinghouse/Resource Library has the following new items available for checkout. Material requests can be made by telephone, email, or by visiting our office. If there are items that you are interested in borrowing or you have a subject you are interested in researching please call Shawndell Dawson at 800-934-9840 ext. 224.

Books

The Batterer as Parent: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics

by Lundy Bancroft, Jay G. Silverman

This book imparts an understanding of the atmosphere that battering parents create for children who live with them. Authors, Bancroft and Silverman, show how partner abuse affects each relationship in a family and explain how children's emotional recovery is inextricably linked to the healing and empowerment of their mothers. The authors also cover the often overlooked area of the post-separation parenting behaviors of those who batter, including their use of custody litigation as a tool of abuse.

Videos

Facing Diversity: Responding to Violence Against Women from Diverse Cultures

This video tells three women's stories, all different but each showing the additional barriers facing women from different cultures. This video shows the barriers from the perspective of a Guatemalan woman, a Korean Woman, and a South Asian Woman. Also note that this video was produced by the Justice Institute of British Columbia in Canada, and illustrates the vignettes from a Canadian perspective, however, the information included in this video is relevant to the diversity issues encountered in the U.S.

Publisher: Intermedia, 800-553-8336

Length: 43 minutes

Hitting Home

The goal of the Hitting Home curriculum is to prevent intimate partner violence through education. Hitting Home provides an innovative approach by using drama to educate students about dangerous relationships. In this film, the audience will see

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powerful portrayals of teen dating violence, date rape, domestic abuse, and difficult personal decision making. The characters tell an interwoven story about abusive dating relationships and the effects abusive households can have on people who live in them. Hitting Home discusses the warning signs of abusive relationships, encourages young adults to respect each other's personal boundaries and to take responsibility for one's own behavior.

Publisher: BGM Films, 800-459-8001, www.hittinghome.net
Length: 42 minutes

Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence That Tears Our Lives Apart

Every man can say these words "The cycle of Violence Stops with me- I will not pass on the pain" and Men's Work is about how to make them a reality. Author Paul Kivel uses his own experience - as a counselor, son, and father - to illustrate how men are taught to respond to women, other men, and traditions. This video explains how to: recognize violence in daily life, understand the roots of violence, intervene with violent men, work with anger, and practice alternatives to violence.

Publisher: HAZELDEN, 800-328-9000
Length: 60 minutes

Toxic Relationships

In this video, high school students discuss disrespect, jealousy, obsessive demands, isolating behaviors, power and control, blaming, as well as consider what a healthy relationship should be like. Concluding with the early warning signs of toxic relationships this video encourages students to look for trust, respect, and acceptance from their friends and partners.

Publisher: Discover Films, 888-649-6453
Length: 30 Minutes

When Help Was There: Four Stories of Elder Abuse

This powerful video examines the crisis of elder abuse through four ethnically diverse cases of physical, emotional, and financial abuse. Salud, a Hispanic mother; the Rens, immigrants from China; Mrs. Allen, who is African-American; and Glen, who is white, tell their story of survival. Their stories illustrate the diversity and complexity of the problem of elder abuse, while also offering the reassurance that there is help available.

Publisher: Fanlight Productions: 800-937-4113 or www.fanlight.com
Length: 19 minutes

Please note that you can view our entire video collection and descriptions on our website at www.odvn.org.

JOIN THE COLLECTIVE VOICE AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Look for ODVN in your workplace campaigns

ODVN is a member of Community Shares of Mid Ohio, a coalition of nonprofit organizations participating in workplace giving campaigns that provides vital financial support to its member agencies through employee workplace donations.

Look for Community Shares in your federal, state, county, and city workplace campaigns as well as at The Ohio State University. Encourage your family, friends and colleagues to give to ODVN and Community Shares.

Become a Member of ODVN

In October we will be sending out our annual membership appeal. We ask that you join or renew your membership along with hundreds of other concerned individuals and supporting organizations working towards the elimination of domestic violence. Look for your membership forms in the mail in October.

For more information on Community Shares or ODVN Membership, call Becky Mason at ODVN.

ODVN STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECT UPDATES

Domestic Violence Prevention Efforts Start in Ohio

Rebecca Cline, LISW

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) has been selected along with 13 other statewide domestic violence coalitions for funding by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, GA for the Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancements and Leadership Through Alliances (DELTA) Program. "All along we've been working on interventions. That is, how to deal with domestic violence once it has already happened," states Nancy Neylon, ODVN's Executive Director. "We've provided shelters for battered women, batterer intervention for their intimate partners after they have committed domestic violence but we've not been organizing ourselves around how to create behavior change in community members so that domestic violence doesn't happen in the first place."

DELTA Program goals are to stimulate the development and implementation of activities focused on preventing the first incident of domestic violence and to integrate these activities into a community's coordinated community response to domestic violence. "A significant part of this project is to engage communities in a process of change through their already existing efforts as well as to implement promising practices in domestic violence primary prevention," offers Rebecca Cline, DELTA Project Coordinator for ODVN.

Through the resources provided by the CDC, ODVN was able to provide funding to four local programs to implement the DELTA Program in Ohio. Women's Tri-County Help Center representing Belmont, Harrison, and Monroe Counties, New Directions representing Knox County, Family and Child Abuse Prevention Center representing Lucas County, and Abuse and Rape Crisis Shelter of Warren County were selected by ODVN's DELTA Project Advisory Committee in June. "We

anticipate that each of these projects will make a very unique contribution to changing how domestic violence services are provided in the future," stated Neylon.

For more information about ODVN's DELTA Project, contact Rebecca Cline, DELTA Project Coordinator at 800-934-9840.



Domestic Violence and Aging Women

Sandy Huntzinger, MSW

Domestic violence against women is a significant problem in this country and worldwide. A group that has been neglected, however, is older women. Although one might assume that domestic violence against older women is included in discussions about elder abuse, most of the literature focuses on self-neglect, institutional abuse, and financial exploitation, as well as family violence.

Nearly 77 million people, more than a quarter of the total U.S. population, are age 50 or older. So there must be many victims of domestic violence in later life, right? For the most part domestic violence programs predominantly serve women between the ages of 18 and 45 that are abused by intimate partners. A 1996 study of 257 older women ages 50-79 found that 32% had experienced physical abuse or threat at some point in their lives. Yet no one knows for certain how many older Americans experience elder abuse or domestic violence in later life. However, based on research to date, it's estimated that between 1-10% of older people are elder abuse victims, and about half of these situations represent domestic violence in later life.

Despite the high incidence statistics for the problem, most elder abuse is not reported to authorities like adult protective services. Of the cases

ODVN STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECT UPDATES (continued)

reported, half of the elder abuse situations were substantiated, and the most common forms of abuse were; physical (6%), abandonment (56%), psychological (54%), and financial (45%).

One reason cases of elder abuse may be underreported is that many professionals believe caregiver stress is the primary cause of domestic elder abuse. In fact, the majority of non-institutional abuse is family violence. The caregiver stress theory describes abusers as well-meaning individuals who want to be caring but have an isolated incident of abusive behavior when they lose control under significant pressure. Unfortunately, some caregivers or family members hurt older people to exert power and control. Many abusers harm older people to get their own needs met, believing they are entitled to use any means necessary to achieve their goals.

Several research studies conclude that many victims of abuse are not dependent on the abuser for care—rather, the abuser depends on the victim. Many abusers are adult children who still live at home and who rely on their parents' resources. Many abusive husbands or male partners believe that women are responsible for taking care of men and responding to their every desire. Many victims, in turn, are not dependent or significantly physically or cognitively impaired. They are older adults experiencing family abuse similar to that experienced by younger battered spouses. Many professionals working in healthcare, the justice system, or faith-based fields have received training on working with battered women. However, such training typically does not address the concerns of older victims. Therefore, these professionals see domestic violence as a problem only faced by younger people and do not identify older victims or respond to them using strategies normally offered to younger victims.

The consequences of this lack of information about the dynamics of domestic abuse in later life are that well meaning professionals often respond inappropriately to victims by treating elder abuse as a case of caregiver stress.

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) in collaboration with the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging is working to increase the safety of the older battered individual and reduce the violence and abuse against older individuals perpetrated by intimate partners, family, other household members, or caregivers. ODVN, through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, is offering training for professionals working with older adults to identify elder abuse and exploitation, provide safety planning and supportive services, understand mandatory reporting laws and the impact on the victim, enhance victim autonomy and choice, and understand and reduce barriers unique to the older battered person.

In order to increase cooperation among professionals across disciplines ODVN is primarily targeting the training to law enforcement, prosecutors, court personnel, adult protective service workers and aging agency workers. Participants will specifically learn: 1) how to screen for elder abuse; 2) to understand how older victims differ from younger victims/survivors of domestic violence, and the barriers to leaving the abusive situation that are unique to the elderly; and 3) best practices for investigation and prosecution of cases of domestic violence involving elderly victims. ODVN is also offering technical assistance to domestic violence programs to help in developing specialized programming for older victims.

If you or your agency is interested in participating in this free on-site training please contact Sandy Huntzinger at ODVN at 800-934-9840 or e-mail at sandyh@odvn.org.

Focus Group Project

Tuesday Ryan-Hart, LISW

We wanted to tell you about an exciting new project that ODVN started this spring. Between February and June, ODVN staff members held ten focus groups with women around the state of Ohio who have experienced domestic violence.

ODVN STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECT UPDATES (continued)

Several local DV programs assisted us in gathering women together to tell us their stories. The purpose of this project is to make sure that we “hear” and accurately represent the voices of women who are battered as we advocate on the local, state, and national levels.

ODVN has several goals for the Focus Group Project, with the overall goal of improving advocacy and service delivery to domestic violence survivors and their children. We are hoping to determine what systems survivors are interacting with, or “who are survivors talking to?” We’d also like to discern what services are working for survivors and assess the barriers to accessing domestic violence services for victims.

It has been very exciting and energizing for us to come into contact with so many courageous women who are willing to share their experiences. We are also gratified to hear about the good work being done with and for survivors around the state and have gained invaluable information about barriers survivors are currently facing as well as what is working for them. Now that we have completed the focus groups, we are beginning to organize the information gained from the groups with the help of Ohio University professor, Walter DeKeseredy, and an OU research assistant, Carolyn Joseph.

We are looking forward to publicizing a summary of the Focus Group Findings in October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We will also make the final report available on our website.

Women of Color Caucus

Tuesday Ryan Hart, LISW

By now, many of you have heard of ODVN’s Women of Color Caucus (WOCC); but I wanted to introduce the WOCC to those of you who may not be familiar with the activities, purpose, and benefits of the WOCC.

The WOCC was established in the spring of 1998 to encourage and support the involvement and leadership of women of color in all programs that are affiliated with ODVN. The term women of color is not limited to women who identify as African-American, but is inclusive of other women from a variety of backgrounds which may include Native American, African, Hispanic, Latina, Haitian, Panamanian, Asian American, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Indo-Chinese, Vietnamese, Pakistani, or multiracial women (to name just a few).

The WOCC has been meeting bi-monthly since last fall, and we are interested in adding new members to increase our visibility, awareness of issues, and effectiveness in addressing concerns of women of color advocates and survivors around the state. The WOCC is currently serving as an advisory group to ODVN’s Focus Group Project and will help plan the joint OCOSA-ODVN Women of Color Institute in November. In addition, the WOCC meetings are a great place for women working in our movement to gain support and information about diverse experiences of domestic violence. At the past several meetings, short workshops have been offered addressing issues of Vicarious Trauma and Self-Care as well as responding to HIV/AIDS in the communities of color.

Another benefit of WOCC membership is access to a listserv administered by ODVN that functions to provide meeting notices, share information about relevant issues and trainings, and keep us in contact with each other between meetings.

Since WOCC members work at programs around the state, we try to hold meetings in different regions of the state to accommodate everyone’s travel needs. At times, this may place the caucus meetings in a distant location from where you are, but please feel free to attend meetings when they are held closer to you or consider traveling to spend time with your sisters across the state.

ODVN STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECT UPDATES (continued)

Please contact Reiko Ozaki at 800-934-9840 ext. 228 or at reikoo@odvn.org if you have any questions or would like to attend an upcoming caucus meeting. We would love to see you there, hear your ideas, and use your energy to better address the needs of women of color survivors and advocates across our state!

SAVE THE DATES
November 6-8, 2003

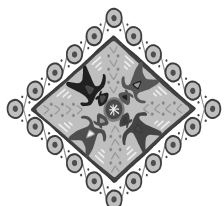
**The Ohio Coalition on Sexual
Assault &
Ohio Domestic Violence Network
Women of Color Caucuses
Present:**

2nd Semi-Annual Women of Color Institute

**Connections: Social Justice for Women of Color
through
Self Preservation And Unity**

**November 6, 7, 8, 2003
The Conference Center at
North Pointe, Lewis Center, Ohio**

**Registration begins in August— Please call
Gwen Bullard @ 614-781-1902 for more information.**



Training Institute: Equipping Advocates with Information and Practical Skills

Reiko Ozaki, LISW

ODVN launched a new modality of training with the Training Institute in the year 2002-2003. The main components of the Training Institute are the two training series for domestic violence advocates titled *Domestic Violence Advocacy Fundamentals* (DVAF) and *Justice Systems Advocacy* (JSA).

ODVN has decided to focus our training efforts on

basic advocacy training with valuable input from directors of domestic violence programs across the state who shared concerns regarding lack of trainings especially for beginning advocates.

DVAF covers a wide range of materials that are basic as well as essential to advocates. During this three-day training, participants have an opportunity to learn and dialogue about topics such as herstory of battered women's movement, the connection between violence against women, sexism and other forms of oppression, individual and systems advocacy, risk assessment, safety planning, hotline work, victim trauma responses, and confidentiality.

ODVN has completed five DVAF trainings, and feedback from the participants was very positive. The trainings were held in Dayton, Athens, Cincinnati, Youngstown and Toledo. Some participants stated in the evaluation, "Exercises were very appropriate and very much helped us understand the key points," "Excellent—encouraged, relaxed, informal environment," and "I will be able to use what I have learned."

The focus of the JSA training is to provide basic and critical legal information to advocates who work with victims in the court system. In addition to the ODVN training facilitators who cover the basic advocacy part of the training, we have legal experts speak on civil and criminal issues of domestic violence during this two-day training. The legal topics discussed include protection orders, divorce and custody, criminal justice system, interstate DV and stalking, name and social security number change, and assisting battered immigrants. This can be a great opportunity for advocates to learn not only basic but also accurate legal information to take back to their current work situations.

All four JSA trainings have been completed for the 2002-2003 year. They were held in Lebanon, Marion, Findlay and St. Clairsville. Some partici-

ODVN STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECT UPDATES (continued)

pants said, "The presenter was really good! Kept my interest," "Very informative. I really thought the exercises were mind opening," and "the speaker was very knowledgeable and presented information very well."

In addition to DVAF and JSA, we do have a variety of trainings available. The topics of the trainings include cultural competency, developing and facilitation of support groups for battered women, and safety planning. These trainings have been popular and in demand by domestic violence programs. We can also provide trainings for communities interested in coordinating a community-wide response to domestic violence as well as programs working with batterers. In addition, we have developed trainings to address domestic violence in the workplace and in the healthcare setting.

ODVN is committed to provide trainings that are conducive to the adult learning experience. Thus, we frequently utilize methods such as small group discussions, role plays, group exercises, and audiovisuals. We also tailor the trainings to the specific needs of the group requesting the training whenever appropriate.

For more information on trainings, please contact ODVN.

Legal Advocacy Caucuses

Shawndell N. Dawson



ODVN's Legal Advocacy Caucuses are the primary vehicle through which legal advocates work together on a statewide level. There are four legal advocacy caucuses that represent the Northeast, Northwest, Southwest/Central and Southeast regions of Ohio. These caucuses provide a networking forum to develop goals and model policies to govern our work and to refine our understanding of the role of justice system advocacy.

ODVN continues to have bimonthly or quarterly

meetings for each of the caucuses. Caucus membership is open to all domestic violence program legal advocates or other direct service staff, volunteers, steering committee members, or allied professionals with an interest in affecting social change through justice system advocacy.

We are excited to announce that we started a Justice System Advocacy list serve. This email list serve can be used for networking or to simply get answers to advocacy questions. ODVN will be using this email list serve to send out meeting notices and to disseminate advocacy information. If you are interested in being on this list please email me at shawndelld@odvn.org.

2003 Legal Caucus Schedule

Southwest/Central Ohio

September 10, 2003
Topic: Child Advocacy
Location: Cincinnati
Host: YWCA
Time: 10:00 am-1:00 pm

November 5, 2003
Topic: Technology Safety
Location: Columbus
Host: ODVN
Time: 10:00 am-1:00 pm

Southeast Ohio Caucus

September 18, 2003
Topic: CPOs
Location: Ironton
Host: Helping Hands
Time: 11:00 am-3:00 pm

December 4, 2003
Topic: Technology Safety
Location: To Be Announced
Host: Undetermined
Time: 11:00 am-3:00 pm

Northwest Ohio Caucus

September 09, 2003
Topic: To be announced
Location: Findlay
Host: Open Arms
Time: 10:00 am- 2:00 pm

November 18, 2003
Topic: Technology Safety
Location: Findlay
Host: Open Arms
Time: 10:00 am-2:00 pm

Northeast Ohio Caucus

September 26, 2003
Topic: CPOs
(Law Enforcement Invited)
Location: Youngstown
Host: Sojourner House
Time: 10:00 am- 2:00 pm

November 21, 2003
Topic: Technology Safety
Location: Akron
Host: Battered Women's Shelter
Time: 10:00 am-2:00 pm

OTHER ODVN NEWS

And the Survey says. . .



In an effort to evaluate our services, ODVN distributed a Satisfaction Survey to conference participants who visited our booth during the 2003 Ohio Attorney General's Two Days in May Conference. Ninety-four surveys were completed and returned by victim service providers, including shelter staff, prosecutor-based programs, probation and parole officers, law enforcement, mental health workers, attorneys, and social workers, representing 31 Ohio counties. 76% of the respondents knew about ODVN and were familiar with the services we provide and 36% have used our clearinghouse library. Of those who did access our services or received resources from the clearinghouse, 57% indicated that the information they received from ODVN helped their organization offer better services to their communities. When asked about other services provided by ODVN, 25% of the respondents have attended ODVN trainings and 20% have attended our legal advocacy caucuses.

If you have suggestions on how ODVN can improve our services to you, please email your comments to info@odvn.org.



HELP SPREAD THE WORD

Women of Rural Ohio Needed for Research Project

Researchers at Ohio University in Athens are looking for women, 18 or older, who have had unwanted sexual experiences after they have left or while trying to leave their husband or male live-in partner. The researchers are trying to learn more about unwanted sexual experiences in women's lives to help eliminate this problem. OU will pay \$25.00 and up to \$7.75 travel costs to participants. If you or someone you know is interested in a confidential interview for this project, please call Carolyn at (740) 517-1502 or Mae at (740) 517-1547.

ODVN Welcomes New Staff

We would like to welcome and introduce you to two new ODVN staff members.

Rebecca Cline joined ODVN in January 2003 as the DELTA Project Coordinator. She previously worked at the Domestic Violence Center in Cleveland as the Education Coordinator for five years. Rebecca is an LISW and received both her BA and MSW from Cleveland State University. She was also recently elected to serve on the National Association of Social Worker's Board of Directors as representative for Region VII that consists of Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Rebecca will be providing technical assistance and training for the Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership through Alliances (DELTA) Program (see article on page 10.)

We also welcome Jennifer Sharp to the position of VAWA Project Coordinator. Prior to coming to ODVN, she worked at Haven House of Pickaway County as a Legal Advocate and community educator. She is a graduate of Denison University. Jennifer's projects include developing informational brochures for victims of domestic violence and community-based public awareness materials to assist local domestic violence programs, developing victim sensitive materials for law enforcement and home health care workers, creating an events calendar for Domestic Violence Awareness Month that will be posted on ODVN's website, and researching and reviewing best practices research on the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence. Portions of the Ohio Model Protocol pertaining to law enforcement, prosecutors and victim assistance will be revised based on this research.

Information is Power!

The revised 2003 version of this sourcebook for victims of domestic violence is now available. Call ODVN for more information.



PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

SB 8 Cyberstalking (Austria) Expands menacing by stalking to prohibit the posting of a computer-related message with intent to urge or incite a person to illegally stalk another, specifically includes electronic communication and telecommunication as a pattern of conduct under the crime, and clarifies the nature of the mental distress that constitutes an element of the crime. **Effective August 29, 2003**

SB 89 Crime Victims Reparations Program (Stivers) This bill specifically allows for attorney fees up to \$2,500, not to exceed \$150.00 per hour to obtain a protection order or custody order. It enacts an exception for a minor dependent of a deceased victim for economic loss or counseling even if the adult had a criminal history. There are a number of additional provisions. For more details, visit www.ag.state.oh.us. **Effective July 1, 2003.**

PENDING

SB 50 Enhanced Domestic Violence Penalties (Schuring) The bill has passed the Senate and the House Judiciary committee. It should pass the House in the fall. The bill increases the penalties for domestic violence offenses. A second offense of an M1 conviction could be enhanced to an F4 and a third offense to an F3. In addition a threat offense (M4) is enhanced to an M2 for a second offense and an M1 for a third offense. The bill also allows a family or household member to request a temporary protection order for basically any crime of violence against them committed by another family or household member.

SB 74 Address Confidentiality (Mallory) If enacted, this bill will establish an address confidentiality program for victims of domestic violence, stalking, child abuse, menacing, and trespass.

HB 141 Gender Violence (Calvert)

This bill creates a civil cause of action for victims of gender violence and allows for attorney fees to be awarded. The bill is meant to replace the portion of VAWA that was deemed unconstitutional in that it exceeded the authority of the Federal government, but allowed states to enact this type of law.

NOTICE TO PROGRAMS SERVING MILITARY FAMILIES

Last year, there was one important change made in responding more effectively to domestic violence in the military families of our nation.

The Armed Forces Domestic Security Act (H.R. 5590), effective on December 2, 2002, closed a loophole previously prohibiting enforcement of civilian orders on military land.

This legislation was introduced by Congressman Robin Hayes of Fayetteville, North Carolina where Fort Bragg is located. The bill passed in record time.

OHIO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NETWORK

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