



# **Experiences of Battered Women in Ohio: A Community Focus Group Report**



**October 2003**

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YWCA of Cincinnati

*Experiences of Battered Women in Ohio: A Community Focus Group Report* was written and compiled by the following ODVN staff:

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**Table of Contents**

**Acknowledgements.....2**  
**Executive Summary.....4**  
**About ODVN.....6**  
**Introduction.....8**  
**ODVN Focus Group Project .....9**  
**Definition of Terms.....10**  
**Demographic Information.....12**  
**Demographic Highlights.....15**  
**Results & Analysis.....17**  
**Survivor Support Systems.....17**  
**Survivors & Shelter Services.....20**  
**Experience with Counseling .....22**  
**Barriers & Gaps in Resources.....25**  
**Barriers for Women of Color.....28**  
**Offender Accountability.....31**  
**Survivors & the Justice Systems.....33**  
    **Experiences with Law Enforcement.....33**  
    **Survivors & Justice System Advocacy.....36**  
    **Survivors & the Criminal Justice System.....37**  
    **Survivors & the Civil Justice System.....40**  
    **Divorce Experience.....42**  
**Other Issues Important to Survivors.....44**  
**Appendices.....47**  
    **Appendix A: Focus Group Tables**  
    **Appendix B: Focus Group Regions Map**  
    **Appendix C: Focus Group Questions & Forms**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Nancy Neylon, ODVN Executive Director

Over the past three decades countless professionals through numerous public and private agencies have strived to provide effective, safe, supportive, and empowering interventions to survivors/victims of domestic violence. Further, our communities have worked collaboratively to develop comprehensive coordinated responses, in an effort to advance the safety of survivors/victims and the accountability of perpetrators.

It is indeed difficult to hear from survivors/victims that our services and our communities have yet to achieve those laudable goals. But it is essential that we listen to their voices. Listening to survivor input may mean that we must intentionally change the focus of our work, both policy and practice. Where do agencies conduct outreach, the courts and emergency rooms or also TANF offices, well baby clinics and substance abuse programs? How is the impact of major legislative changes on the lives of survivors/ victims such as preferred arrest and welfare reform, and marriage promotion being evaluated? Are the current interventions such as emergency shelter and protection orders responsive to the actual needs of survivors/victims? If not how do they need to change to make them responsive?

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) plays a critical role in the development and enhancement of standards of service for local domestic violence programs and improved response from the health care, public benefits, housing, children's services,

and justice systems. To this end ODVN convenes a Promising Practices Committee whose task is to research, discuss and examine evidence-based policies and practices and recommend adoption of best practice models to the ODVN Steering Committee. In addition ODVN collaborates with numerous state, regional, and local initiatives focused on the development of evidence based practice for domestic violence intervention and prevention.

As ODVN began the strategic planning process for 2003 it was agreed that the policy work of ODVN and local intervention policies and practices would be best informed by the survivors/victims of domestic violence. The idea of conducting focus groups emerged from discussions with Dr. Cris Sullivan, University of Michigan, regarding evaluation of domestic violence services and the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence who had previously conducted a series of focus groups with victims/survivors.

The purpose of the focus groups was to explore the success of intervention services in meeting the needs of survivors/victims of domestic violence by talking to them directly.

Our objective was to provide a safe forum for survivors/victims to discuss their experiences confidentially. We wanted to find out what their greatest barriers and challenges were as well as what interventions and professionals were most helpful. We worked closely with the members of ODVN's Promising Practices Committee and Women of Color Caucus to include diverse geographic locations around Ohio and to secure survivors/ victims for the focus groups, both women who had accessed

local domestic violence programs and those who had not.

We wish to acknowledge the support of the Promising Practices Committee, the Women of Color Caucus, and the entire ODVN Steering Committee throughout this process. ODVN would also like to thank Dr. Walter DeKeseredy of Ohio University for his guidance in the analysis of the data and Carolyn Joseph, Ohio University graduate student, for her invaluable assistance in data analysis.

Analysis of the demographic information from the focus groups found that domestic violence clearly represents the intersection of oppression in women's lives. Women who are experiencing domestic violence are also experiencing severe economic disadvantage, regardless of their marital status. Perhaps as relevant to women's lives as the abuse is the instability of employment, housing, and educational opportunities.

Another major finding was that victims of domestic violence still face incredibly inconsistent response among helping professionals, particularly in the justice system. From the discussions of the survivors, it is apparent that professionals in local communities play a role in revictimization of survivors/victims and contribute to the lack of accountability of perpetrators. Local domestic violence services play a critical role in providing safety, emotional support and practical help to survivors/victims. While not all of their expectations had been met with regard to service provision, the victims who participated in the focus groups who had used local domestic violence services credited them with being the major

reason they were able to maintain a violence free life.

The work of addressing domestic violence began with making visible what was, for so long, invisible. As women began to speak to each other, their collective voice penetrated the public denial and silence surrounding the reality of violence in our homes. What was secret and acceptable had become a topic of public discussion and concern. Constantly evaluating and re-evaluating the system of interventions and public policy initiatives for survivors/victims cannot be successful without the inclusion of their voices. Services and public policy must be grounded in the experiences of survivors/victims.

## About ODVN

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) is a statewide coalition of domestic violence programs, allied agencies, and concerned individuals working to eliminate domestic violence in Ohio. ODVN believes that ending violence against women and children requires a connection between individuals and organizations to create a clear vision and collective voice for social and systemic change. ODVN's purpose is to support and strengthen Ohio's response to domestic violence through training, increased public awareness, and public policy work on behalf of battered women and their children.

Over the past ten years, the Ohio Domestic Violence Network has worked to address the needs of battered women, community members, and service providers. ODVN staff offers coalition and community members over 60 years of combined experience in social change, public policy, and woman-defined advocacy. Committed to empowerment, public education, and social change, ODVN offers a wide spectrum of services including training, technical assistance, victim/survivor information referral, a clearinghouse of domestic violence resources, and continual networking opportunities for service providers and their allies in the state.

ODVN's comprehensive training program focuses on such topics as improving the medial response to domestic violence, elder abuse, domestic violence in the work place, domestic violence advocacy fundamentals, and facilitating survivor support groups. ODVN offers extensive training to domestic violence service providers and

allied professionals in the domestic violence field, including law enforcement and medical professionals. Each year allied professionals are invited to attend a variety of job-specific workshops designed to improve their response to domestic violence victims and perpetrators. These efforts are complimented each year by ODVN's coordination of and participation in statewide training programs.

In addition to dynamic training services, ODVN also offers on-site and telephone consultation to domestic violence service providers and allied professionals. Consultation is offered in a number of areas including program development, agency administration, grant management, media advocacy and developing community prevention initiatives. ODVN also assists communities in developing coordinated community responses to domestic violence and sponsors issue-specific networking caucuses, such as legal advocacy and women of color.

ODVN serves as the statewide leader in making connections between service providers in Ohio and also serves as an information network for victims/survivors of domestic violence. To ensure that survivors have a link to support in Ohio, ODVN provides a statewide 24-hour toll free information and referral line that links survivors to domestic violence programs in their communities.

ODVN's website and semiannual newsletter provide victim/survivors, service providers, and concerned community members with access to the most up to date information on current issues involving domestic violence and connects them with the larger domestic

violence community in Ohio and the United States.

ODVN's clearinghouse is a comprehensive reference collection that consists of more than 2,100 articles, books and videos addressing a wide spectrum of domestic violence issues such as batterer's intervention, supporting communities of color, anti-oppression advocacy, supporting the immigrant community, elder abuse, women with disabilities, criminal justice system advocacy, and coordinated community response. All articles, books, and videos are available for public circulation.

## Introduction

Over 30 years ago, violence against women activists and battered women began to focus on raising public awareness and addressing sexual and domestic violence in the lives of women. This work was necessary for a number of reasons: there was an overwhelming need for services for battered women and batterers were not being held accountable for their behavior in their communities. In addition, advocates found that women reaching out for support received highly inconsistent community responses. There were also medical and legal policies that made women feel revictimized by the system they turned to for help.

As these conditions may continue through the present day, domestic violence advocates and battered women are still speaking out in public and refusing to let domestic violence remain a private issue. One way to address these ongoing issues is to convene survivor focus groups.

Survivor focus groups are organized by the Violence Against Women Movement to stay grounded in the experiences of survivors and to offer them the opportunity to directly inform advocacy efforts and services. Survivor focus groups are designed to take the guesswork out of forming policies and developing services for victimized women, their children, and abusive individuals. As domestic violence advocates continue to interact with communities on behalf of battered women, the responses they encounter reinforce the importance of seeking out the experiences of survivors and relaying that information to community members.

Domestic violence is an epidemic social problem that warrants public attention. Results from the National Violence Against Women Survey indicate that violence against women is primarily intimate partner violence: 64 percent of the women who reported being raped, physically assaulted, and or stalked since age 18 were victimized by a current or former husband, cohabitating partner, boyfriend, or date (Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. 2000). In fact, national surveys continue to report that during their life time, approximately half of all women experience some violence within an intimate relationship, with 25 percent experiencing recurring abuse (Brandewine, 1999).

ODVN believes that the experiences of survivors who have used community services should always be present to ensure that social change efforts are relevant and appropriate. Communities benefit from staying grounded in the experiences of battered women as well. The elimination of domestic violence calls for more than just establishing shelters and forming community taskforces. Knowing where battered women and their children are turning for help, uncovering their experiences with community services once they have disclosed their experience of abuse, and addressing the barriers victim/survivors find when looking for support and protection promotes more effective domestic violence intervention. Victim/survivor safety and offender accountability are enhanced, which ultimately leads to social change.

# ODVN Focus Group Project

As the statewide leader in advocacy with and for battered women it is vitally important that ODVN continues to consult with battered women to stay grounded in their experiences and to uncover what needs to be done to promote appropriate community response to domestic violence. In order to advance advocacy efforts, ODVN wanted to uncover the following: who were battered women talking to for help with domestic violence; what services were beneficial; what additional assistance might have been needed but not found; what were their experiences with the criminal justice system; and how were community members responding to them when they sought support or protection.

The project began by consulting with ODVN's Promising Practices Committee and Women of Color Caucus for input related to the scope of the project. Both groups decided that several focus groups and a few individual interviews would be conducted to respond to a variety of victim/survivor needs. With their input, ODVN strived to make the focus groups diverse in relation to racial and ethnic background, age, as well as geographic location. Committed to honoring the diversity and uniqueness among women's experiences, ODVN relied on the support of local domestic violence programs and members of both the Promising Practices Committee and Women of Color Caucus to bring together a diverse group of women who wanted to share their experiences.

In order to honor confidentiality and safety of participants, ODVN included

only female survivors of domestic violence in the focus groups. Two female staff members from ODVN conducted the groups with one staff member facilitating the group session and the other present to take notes. To ensure note-taking accuracy each group session and individual interview was tape recorded. Staff members from the hosting programs were not allowed to be present during the group session, and participants were assured of their anonymity in the written report.

Both the Promising Practices Committee and the Women of Color Caucus assisted ODVN staff in developing the questions asked in each focus group. For a complete list of the questions asked during the focus group, please see Appendix C. Nine questions were developed centering on the following themes:

- Who were survivors talking to about their experience of abuse
- Responses from service providers, including domestic violence programs
- Responses from the justice systems
- Barriers facing victims
- Additional services needed
- Experiences of women of color
- Abuser accountability

In February of 2003, ODVN began conducting focus groups in five regions around the state. Over a five month period, ODVN conducted eight focus groups and four individual interviews with survivors of domestic violence. Each group session lasted from one to three hours and consisted of between four and fourteen women. Four individual interviews were also conducted in an effort to hear the voices of women who may not have been

comfortable giving information in a group setting. Focus group participants included women who had and had not accessed shelter services, women of color, as well as survivors in urban and rural areas. In total, eighty-four women from the Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, Southeast, and Central parts of Ohio participated in the project.

Permission to tape record the discussions was obtained from each group participant. Participants were also given the option not to fill out the general demographic questionnaire or participate in any part of the discussion with which they were uncomfortable.

By June of 2003, all groups and individual interviews were completed, and ODVN began processing the data gathered from group participants. The audio recordings of the focus groups were all professionally transcribed, and through a collaborative effort with researchers from Ohio University, ODVN began processing and analyzing the data. With the support of researchers, Dr. Walter DeKeseredy and Carolyn Joseph, the quantitative and qualitative data of this report was organized and interpreted.

## Defining Terms

The following terms will appear throughout this report. They are defined to offer a clear perspective on the experience and discussions of the focus group participants and to assist in understanding report findings.

- **Abuser/Batterer/Offender:** This term will be used to represent persons who are abusive or have abused an intimate partner or family/household member.

- **Accountability:** This term refers to holding individuals responsible for their choice to use violence and not allowing blame to be displaced onto victims, childhood experiences, substance abuse, or other circumstances.
- **Barriers:** These are numerous difficulties battered women experience that impede their efforts to free their lives of violence. These barriers may be social, physical, or economic in nature. They may be barriers that are internal or external to the victim such as lack of community resources, physical restraint from the abuser, or misinformation about their options.
- **Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners.
- **Oppression:** Cultural and institutionalized social discrimination that is based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other bias directed toward a person because of their membership in a particular group. Oppression may involve denial services or resources, involve harsh judgments, or perpetuate harmful stereotypes.
- **Revictimization:** This term refers to negative treatment a victim/survivor may experience when seeking help from

community members, domestic violence programs, medical professionals, social service agencies, or other community systems. This negative treatment mirrors the behaviors of an abusive individual.

Revictimization may include blaming the victim/survivor for the violence in her life or making her responsible for ending the violence.

- **Victim/Survivor/Battered Women:** These three terms will be used interchangeable in this report to represent persons who have been or are still being abused by an intimate partner or family/household member.
  
- **Women of Color:** The term Women of Color refers to women who belong to those groups which have typically been targets of racism in this country. Women of color are a diverse group that is inclusive of Native American, African American, Latina, Asian American, and multiracial women as well as others.

# Demographic Information

A questionnaire was created and distributed to obtain demographic information from focus group participants. The nine questions covered the areas of race and ethnicity, age, personal income, marital status, children, and community support services. Please see Appendix C for a complete version of the demographic form that participants completed. All participants in the focus group project were women who had experienced abuse. All participants voluntarily shared their demographic information for this project. The information gathered from all eighty-four participants is illustrated in the tables below.

## Race & Ethnicity

Of the 84 women interviewed, 66.3% identified themselves as Caucasian and 37.3% identified as women of color. For further information on the race/ethnicity of participants please refer to Table 1.

**Table 1: Race & Ethnicity**

Race/Ethnicity	% of All Women
African American/Black	28.9%
Asian American	2.4%
Caucasian/White	66.3%
Latina, Chicano, Hispanic	1.2%
Native American	4.8%
Does not Identify with Any Choices	10.8%

## Age

Approximately 16% of the women interviewed were between the ages of 18-24 years old. The majority of the women interviewed (75.9%) were between the ages of 25-54 years of age, with 27.7% of the participants were

between the ages of 25-34 years of age. Additionally, 37.4% of the women were between the ages of 35-44 years of age. Please see Table 2 for more detailed information about the age of participants.

**Table 2: Age**

Age Range	% of all Women
18-24	15.7%
25-34	27.7%
35-44	37.4%
45-54	10.8%
55+	8.4%

## Personal Income

The 84 women who participated in the focus groups had an income ranging from \$0- \$35,000+. As Table 3 indicates, approximately 60.2% of the participants' personal income was between \$0-\$12,000. Overall, 75% of the women whose income ranged from \$0 to \$12,000 were from urban areas of Ohio. Thirteen percent of the participants indicated their personal income was within the range of \$12,000-\$18,000. Almost 10% of the participants indicated that their personal income was over \$35,000 a year. Please refer to Table 3 for additional information related to participants' incomes.

**Table 3: Range of Personal Income\***

Personal Annual Income Ranges	% of all Women	% of Women from Urban Areas	% of Women from Rural Areas
\$0 - \$12,000	60.2 %	75%	51.3%
\$12,000 - \$18,000	13.3 %	4.6%	23.1%
\$18,000 - \$25,000	4.8%	2.3%	7.7%
\$25,000 - \$35,000	8.4%	9.1%	7.7%
\$35,000+	9.6%	11.4%	7.7%

**Table 4: Public Assistance\***

Have you used public assistance?	% of all Women
Yes	75.9%
No	22.9%
No Response	1.2%

**Marital Status**

Seventy-four percent of the women indicated that they were married, separated, or divorced. Approximately 1/5 (20.5%) of the participants were single, and 1.2% of the participants indicated that they were widowed.

**Table 5: Marital Status\***

Status	% of all Women
Divorced	39.8%
Married	25.3%
Partnered	4.8%
Separated	8.4%
Single	20.5%
Widowed	1.2%

**Children**

Eighty-eight percent of the women who participated in the group had children, with sixty five percent indicating that they had more than one child. Thirty seven percent of the participants indicated that children protective services had been involved in their family, while fifty three percent of the women with children indicated that child protective services had not been involved with their family.

**Table 6: Children\***

Children	% of all Women
Yes	88%
No	12.1%

**Table 7: Number of Children**

# of Children	% of all Women
One Child	24.7%
More than one Child	68.5%

**Survivors & Community Support**

Focus group participants indicated that they turned to domestic violence shelters or programs, the legal system, or counseling services for support when experiencing violence in their lives. Almost 70% of the participants said that they had sought support from domestic violence shelters, and 60% of participants said they sought support from a mental health professional.

A large percentage of women sought criminal charges/protection orders (54.4%) or civil remedies or protection orders (47%).

Hospitals or other medical institutions were also places where survivors frequently turned to for support, with 38.9% of the participants indicating that they had sought medical attention. A significant percentage of women also sought the support of spiritual leaders (24%).

Please see the following page for Table 8.

**Table 8: Use of Services for Support\***

<b>Types of Services Used</b>	<b>% of all Women</b>	<b>% of Women from Urban Areas</b>	<b>% of Women from Rural Areas</b>
<b>Shelter or Domestic Violence Program</b>	69.9 %	70.5%	69%
<b>Criminal Court (Charges or TPOs)</b>	55.4%	59.1%	51%
<b>Civil Court (Divorce, Custody, or CPOs)</b>	47%	42.3%	51%
<b>Medical/Hospital</b>	38.6%	45.5%	31%
<b>Counseling Services</b>	60.2%	50%	72%
<b>Church or Clergy</b>	24.1%	29.5%	18%
<b>Other Community Services</b>	27.83%	13.6%	44.1%

\*Data not broken down by demographic characteristics due to similarity between groups.

## Highlights of Key Demographic Information

While the majority of participants in the focus groups were Caucasian, approximately 37% identified as women of color. It is important to note that the majority of the women of color who participated were African American. This fact points to the need for additional outreach efforts by both ODVN and local domestic violence programs to provide services and hear the voices of other groups of women of color. Notably underrepresented in this project are women of Asian, Latina, and Indigenous descent. A small number of women who “did not identify with any choices” described themselves as immigrants to this country.

Clearly the majority of the project participants had lower incomes with 60.2% reporting an income of \$12,000 or less. In addition, a full 75.9% of participants had used public assistance.

This has several implications for domestic violence programs and others providing services to victim/survivors, including the need for increased advocacy for survivors to address economic justice issues in Ohio. Clearly, many victims in Ohio are affected by such economic issues including housing shortages, welfare reform, and the current economy. Programming and advocacy to help survivors must address these issues.

In addition, the disproportionately high representation of women with lower incomes in this project, illustrates one characteristic of the population of women who are using the services of

domestic violence programs. Not only should service providers address issues facing this particular group of women, they also need to evaluate how to make services more relevant to women with higher incomes who are experiencing abuse as well.

In this particular sample, domestic violence programs continue to be the place where survivors turn to most for assistance with violence in their lives, with almost 70% of survivors stating that they had turned to their local domestic violence program for support. This points to the vital role domestic violence programs play in providing victim safety. Clearly, the services provided to survivors by Ohio domestic violence programs are meeting significant needs and are relevant and timely. With the cuts in private and public funding, continual funding for general domestic violence programs is in jeopardy at a time when these services are obviously needed.

## **Limitations of the Project**

While the information gathered from the focus groups is indeed valuable, it is important to mention the limitations of the data. Because this data was gathered by group interviews, there exists the possibility of interview bias. In addition, the group format of gathering information may have caused the experiences of some of the women interviewed to be lost among the voices of other women in the group.

The sample size of 84 women is not large enough to generalize battered women, although ODVN believes that the stories shared in the groups is indicative of the experience of many battered women and their children in Ohio. Because the vast majority of women who participated in the project were gathered with the assistance of domestic violence programs around the state, victim/survivors who have not used such services are underrepresented in this report. Finally, although an effort was made to include the voices of a diverse group of women of color, the majority of women of color interviewed were African American. Thus, important issues facing other groups of women of color are underrepresented in this report.

## RESULTS & ANALYSIS

The following portion of this report will highlight the results of the focus group project. Survivor's experiences in the following areas will be discussed: disclosing experiences of abuse, shelter services, barriers encountered, community resources, and the criminal and civil justice systems. Each section will have an analysis of the focus group participants' responses followed by a discussion of the future implications of these results. Throughout the report quotes from the participants will be used to illustrate discussion points.

For the purposes of this report, responses from the four individual interviews were combined and reported as results from one "group." Therefore, the following results section will discuss the responses of nine groups of women. These responses were brought together due to the similarity of experiences between the individual women interviewed and ease of analysis and reporting of results.

Due to the nature of group interviews, some group members had contradictory experiences. "Group responses" recorded refer to the experience of the clear majority of that group. For example, if nine of eleven women indicated difficulty with child support enforcement, then this was recorded as an issue for that particular group. If responses were more evenly divided, then the report indicates a "mixed experience" or reports both experiences. Therefore data reported refers generally to the responses from the majority of the group members. ODVN understands that this decreases the sensitivity of the data but feels that the results do

accurately describe the experiences of the focus group participants.

## Survivor Support Systems

### Results/Analysis

All focus group sessions were opened with the question, "Who did you talk to about your experience of domestic violence?" This question was asked to assist ODVN in determining the direction of future advocacy efforts. Please see Table 9 for a complete description of responses.

ODVN learned that victim/survivors talk to many people in their communities in an effort to get help with domestic violence. One hundred percent of groups indicated that they had spoken to their local domestic violence program about the abuse they had experienced. Many survivors reported that they had not spoken with anyone about the abuse before speaking to domestic violence program staff.

"I found the shelter...it was like the weight of the whole world had lifted off my shoulders. I didn't have to worry about where I was going to go, what I was going to do because I didn't want to go back there."

"Without the shelter, I don't know what I would have done."

**TABLE 9: WHO ARE SURVIVORS TALKING TO ABOUT ABUSE?**

Survivors Talked To	# of Groups	% of Groups
Police	9	100%
Shelter/DV Program	9	100%
Friends/Family	8	88%
Church/Minister	7	77%
Therapist	7	77%
Doctors	6	67%
Hotline	5	55%
Neighbor	3	33%
Someone in Criminal Justice System	3	33%
Abuser's Family	3	33%
Children Services	3	33%
Other Community Service	1	11%

Surprisingly, one hundred percent of groups also discussed talking to the police about their experience of domestic violence. Survivors experience with the criminal justice system will be discussed at length later in the report.

Eight of nine groups (89%) reported that they had spoken with their friends and family about their experience of abuse. Reactions from friends and family were reported as very inconsistent ranging from very supportive and helpful to hostile and victim blaming.

The third most common places of disclosure occurred to therapists or clergy members. Seventy-seven percent of survivors disclosed to one or both of these community resources. Counselor response to victim/survivor disclosure is discussed later in this report. Participants indicated that the responses of clergy and church communities were generally positive, leading to the conclusion that this is a system that has aspects that are working well for survivors; however, some survivors

described that while their clergy member was emotionally supportive, the referrals and advice given were not always helpful or safe for the survivor.

“I thought I had to learn not to upset him. And several years ago when he hit me so bad, I called my pastor, and he said ‘you need to find out your rights.’ I didn’t know that I had rights.”

A significant number of survivors turned to medical services or hospitals for support when experiencing domestic violence. Sixty seven percent (6 groups) reported talking to their doctors about their experience of abuse. Rural women were less likely to turn to this resource for help than were women in urban areas, although both groups of women accessed these services at a significant rate. Reportedly, responses in the medical community ranged from very helpful (some survivors first heard about the local shelter from their doctors) to unsupportive and revictimizing.

One third (33%) of survivors spoke with neighbors or the abusers’ family about their experience of domestic violence, again accessing informal community networks for support. Three groups (33%) mentioned discussing the abuse with someone in the criminal justice system. Finally, thirty three percent of victim/survivors discussed their experience of abuse with their local children protective services.

## **Future Implications/Directions**

### ***Support of Local Domestic Violence Programs***

Because domestic violence programs are often the first source of assistance for victims, these programs remain in the front-line of defense against domestic violence. Continued funding of domestic violence services is imperative to help victim/survivors and their children obtain safety. For communities to adequately address domestic violence, local domestic violence programs must have sufficient funding and the collaborative support of other community service providers.

### ***Increase General Community Awareness of Domestic Violence***

Since such a large number of victim/survivors first disclose abuse to their friends and family, efforts must be made to increase general public awareness of domestic violence. By making the general public aware of domestic violence and its harmful effects on battered women and their children, a significant number of victims who never come into contact with other community systems may be helped.

### ***Support Appropriate Response by Faith Communities***

While victim/survivors generally indicated positive response from faith communities to their disclosure of abuse, continued education of clergy and church communities could only enhance the safety of victim/survivors and their children. Education should address increasing understanding of domestic violence dynamics as well as appropriate interventions and referrals.

### ***Improve Medical and Hospital Assessment and Intervention***

Due to the large number of survivors who disclose abuse to their medical provider, medical personnel should be a