

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

This edition of For Better Times is dedicated to the courageous families that are surviving in spite of the ongoing physical, emotional, sexual, financial violence they experience in their homes.

“SHINE THE LIGHT” DuPage County Family Shelter Service



DuPage County Family Shelter Service

Illinois is
fortunate
to still have

many full-service, 24-7, domestic violence programs located throughout the state, in spite of the poor economy. This month we highlight Family Shelter Service, with locations throughout DuPage County. Of particular interest, is a special outdoor program designed for children—the Nature Explore Classroom. In the spring of 2009, Family Shelter Service was chosen as a site for a Nature Explore Classroom, funded by Mary Kay Inc. The Mary Kay Foundation and the Arbor Day Foundation partnered with Dimensions Educational Research Foundation to build five Nature Explore classrooms at five domestic violence shelters located throughout the United States. The

Nature Explore Classroom was completed during the summer of 2009 and covers a large portion of the back yard at the Downers Grove Shelter of Family Shelter Service.

Nature Explore Classrooms are outdoor learning spaces designed to include nature in the daily lives and learning of children. This is particularly beneficial for children who have been exposed to domestic violence, who need a safe space in which to explore their feelings, connect with their peers and heal from the trauma



they have witnessed at home. Also, evidence shows that children who are engaged and active are far more likely to exhibit positive behavior and exhibit stronger social skills, all of which are critical for children who have witnessed domestic violence. Clients

in Family Shelter’s Children’s Program find stress relief in this outdoor environment and the classroom offers creative opportunities to engage with them:

Non-directed play therapy in the Nature Explore Classroom enables the children freedom to explore and move in a safe place, feel a soothing connection to nature, and interact with their mothers as they experience all of the playful activities available to them. Children of all ages can express themselves by making plaques

to hang in the trees and teenagers benefit from the additional freedoms and new perspectives offered by counseling sessions held outdoors. Child witnesses of domestic violence in childhood often have badly damaged connections with family members,

friends, and with their own sense of self. The Nature Explore classroom provides a setting where counselors can help restore children’s ability to express themselves, to bond with their family, and begin to heal from the devastating effects of trauma.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE REPORT: THE FIRST YEAR

Seventy-six (76) domestic violence homicides took place in one year and have been summarized in “Domestic Violence Homicide In Illinois: May 2009 to June 2010,” a report published by the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV). This is too many deaths caused by domestic violence and communities need to take action. Domestic violence can lead to the homicide of the batterer’s victim, and sometimes her loved ones too. An example of this type of tragedy involved the death of a daughter and sister of a domestic violence victim. The victim and her daughter, the child of the batterer, were living with the victim’s parents where they were frequently stalked and threatened. They sought help from a domestic violence program and received an order of protection that was violated by the batterer repeatedly, leaving the victim’s family to live in fear. Until one day, the batterer shot and killed his teen-aged daughter, set fire to the house, and then murdered his ex-wife’s sister. It was only after he killed the two people that meant the most to his victim that the community took the threats and stalking seriously. It turns out, he’d also shot and killed his first wife many years earlier.

Domestic Violence Homicide Data

Total Number of Incidents--59

Total Number of Homicides--76

Homicides committed by women
4--(5.3%) 3 females & 1 male

Homicides committed by men
72--(94.7%)
50 females & 22 males

How Were Victims Murdered?

44.7% were shot to death

22% were beaten to death

15% were stabbed to death

Three died by strangulation

Six died by fire and/or smoke inhalation

One toddler died by shaken baby syndrome

One toddler was suffocated in a bag

One elderly person died due to an aneurysm caused after being pushed to the ground

Perpetrators, Victims and Their Relationships

Wives, ex-wives--majority of which were shot

Girl friends, and ex-girl friends--tended to be beaten, stabbed or strangled

Six victims were the sons of the perpetrators (majority shot) and two were their daughters (beaten)

Other relatives murdered included Mothers, Fathers, Stepmothers, Brothers, Cousins, Sisters, and Nieces

Four victims were the current in-laws of the perpetrator,

Five former in-laws (father, mother, two nephews, and one niece) were beaten to death

Seven of 10 friends were shot to death

Two children were killed by their mother’s boyfriends by shaking or beating.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE REPORT: THE FIRST YEAR (continued)

Discussion

The Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) began collecting domestic violence homicide data in May 2009; this report covers June 2009 to May 2010. Within this time frame a total of 59 incidents took the lives of 76 victims. Nine incidents account for more than one victim, the range for multiple victims being from two to five in a single incident. The data relied upon includes information contained in newspaper articles from papers with an on-line presence around the state of Illinois. Additional information was collected from the directors of 55 domestic violence agencies located throughout Illinois. Fifty-nine homicide incidents and 76 murder victims are sufficiently large numbers to examine the domestic violence homicides in Illinois from one year. However, for some categories, the numbers are too small to have any statistical relevance; but the data are suggestive of possible trends that could be examined if additional cases are added to the database.

What can be identified from the data is that during the past year domestic violence homicides are most often committed by men (94.7%) and that women are the most likely to be their victims (69.4%). Women over-all are more likely to be domestic violence victims, regardless of the perpetrator, as they represent almost 70% of the total individuals killed. Regarding the relationships between victims and perpetrators, it is hard to make any conclusions from the four incidents perpetrated by women in the database.

A large group of victims includes friends or relatives of the partner or former partner. Seventeen people lost their lives because they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or were related to the perpetrators' partner or ex-partner. This data suggests some validity for the concept that the perpetrator goes after people important to their intimate partners with the murder of the in-laws, former in-laws, children of the partner, and victims' friends.

Newspapers did indicate that the victims in eight out of 59 incidents were known to have been verbally threatened. The victims in two incidents were known to have been stalked. One of these also had verbal threats and another had an order of protection. However, there is not enough information included in newspaper accounts to adequately examine how many victims were stalked or threatened prior to their murders, nor is there sufficient information concerning orders of protection consistently collected and included in the news articles.

Next Steps

The ICADV will continue to collect homicide data for at least one additional year so as to have comparative data from one year to the next to look for any trends. Year two will make use of a news clipping service to help cut down the amount of time required for the news searches. This will help provide additional time to conduct some in-depth analysis about cases already in the database. Of importance is looking at the history of orders of protection, as well as information about the disposition of the perpetrators of domestic violence homicide.

“We all probably know someone who has experienced domestic violence in a relationship-- whether is was physical, emotional, or financial. Therefore, WE ALL have an important part to play in ending domestic violence in our communities.”

Vickie Smith, Executive Director, Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence

900 VOICES--Survivors of Domestic Violence Speak Out

RELEASED: SPRINGFIELD, IL, OCTOBER 1, 2010

Domestic violence too often can lead to homicide and communities must take action. Last winter, a murder took place in northern Illinois. The victim was a woman in her 40's. She was shot execution-style in a hotel parking lot. The perpetrator was her ex-husband who was mad because she did not want his Christmas present and did not want to get back together with him. The perpetrator had a history of threatening his victim who previously had orders of protection against him. For these victims, their families, and thousands of other survivors enduring the emotional and physical trauma of domestic violence every day, we announce Governor Pat Quinn's proclamation that October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) in Illinois.

With the direction of over 50 community based, domestic violence service providers throughout Illinois, ICADV is the powerful statewide voice for battered women and their children, working to ensure that families have knowledge of and access to services and opportunities to pursue a safer life. It is through these local agencies that ICADV was able to survey over 900 survivors about the supports they need which include access to safe shelter and housing; resources for increasing economic sufficiency; accountability for her batterer; and resources to heal from the trauma of domestic violence. Each survivor's story is unique, but many survivors experience common barriers in their pursuit of safety for themselves and their children. One survivor responded to the survey by saying ***"Most people blame me for what he does. They ask why I don't leave. Well I've tried to leave, but I always end up going back until this time... [W]hen [the community] that is supposed to help...is making me accountable for what he does, I don't see the point. It's frustrating. So far [the staff at the domestic violence agency] are the only ones who believed me."***

Survivors have spoken. Today, ICADV published "From The Front Lines: Survivor and Provider Perspectives on Illinois Domestic Violence Assistance Gaps and Action Initiatives", a summary of what 900 survivors reported and the plan ICADV has developed to help communities step up and take action against domestic violence.

Joyce M. Coffee, current President of the ICADV Board of Directors, says "It is one thing for me as the President of the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence to say what victims want; what they need. But it is quite another for them to speak for themselves. And they have. "How has the state of Illinois fared? Have communities provided needed services? This is the report card. This is where the rubber meets the road."

Vickie Smith, Executive Director of ICADV, adds "We all probably know someone who has experienced domestic violence in a relationship –whether it was physical, emotional, or financial. Therefore, we all have an important part to play in ending domestic violence in our communities. Today, we shared news about people who have died recently in a domestic violence incident, and now we must think about ways that we all can help in stopping the spread of this epidemic in our state."

To learn more about specific ways you can help support survivors of domestic violence in your community, visit www.ilcadv.org.

WE CALL YOU TO ACTION

The Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) is the powerful statewide voice for battered women and their children, working to ensure that families have knowledge of and access to services and opportunities to pursue a safer life. ICADV is a not-for-profit membership organization composed of over 50 domestic violence service providers whose primary mission is to provide battered women and their children with assistance. The vision of ICADV is to eliminate violence against women and their children; to promote the eradication of domestic violence across the state of Illinois; to ensure the safety of survivors, their access to services, and their freedom of choice; to hold abusers accountable for the violence they perpetrate; and to encourage the development of victim-sensitive laws, policies, and procedures across all systems that affect survivors of domestic violence.

Domestic violence providers alone cannot end family violence in Illinois. All systems within our state must do their part—public and private; national, statewide, and local; organizations; businesses; and individuals. The following stakeholders each play a key role in assisting survivors to safety and we call them to action.

Landlords	Banks	Circuit Clerks	Faith-Based Organizations
Landlord Associations,	Financial Assistance Firms	Law Enforcement	Health Professionals
Property Management	Public and Private	State’s Attorneys	Doctors
Firms	Not For Profit Credit	Judges	Dentists
Federal and State Homeless	Counseling Agencies	Private Bar	Nurses
Funding Sources	Tax Assistance Firms	Partner Abuse Intervention	Nurse Practitioners
Local Homeless Service	Job Training	Providers	Public Health Departments
Providers	Vocational	Legal Aid	Insurance Companies
Community Continuums of	Educational	Mediation Providers	Businesses
Care	Job Placement Services	Probation Departments	Mental Health Service
Legislators	Child Care Providers	Medical Facilities	Providers
Hotels	Employers	Hospitals	Substance Abuse Service
Community Members	Federal & State Government	Emergency Rooms	Providers
Media	Community Organizations	Clinics	Schools and Parents
Centers for Independent	Advocacy Groups		Child Protective Services
Living			
Supportive Housing			
Providers			

We all have an important part to play in ending domestic violence in our communities. To start taking action against domestic violence and support our work in ending violence against women, please contact ICADV at 217-789-2830 or ilcadv@ilcadv.org. You may also visit www.ilcadv.org to find information about how to contact your local domestic violence service provider.

CALL TO ACTION, contd.

CONCLUSIONS

SURVIVOR AND PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES ON ILLINOIS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ASSISTANCE GAPS AND ACTION INITIATIVES

Our assessment shows us that the survivors of domestic violence in Illinois face barriers when trying to obtain:

- A safe place to live while in crisis and transitioning to long term housing solutions;
- Resources to help her become more economically sufficient so she can survive, life skills and education to increase employability, affordable transportation, affordable child care, and a better understanding of managing household finances.
- A justice system that holds batterers accountable and makes her safety a priority by fully understanding the dynamics of domestic violence, by implementing the entire Illinois Domestic Violence Act and by increasing resources available to her to seek these legal protections; and
- Timely access to affordable and appropriate mental and physical health services to support long term safety.

These needs are multiplied for survivors who also have physical and/or mental disabilities, who are geographically isolated and/or who are experiencing language barriers.

The severe inaccessibility of services for victims of domestic violence and their dependents is statewide, but there are some regional differences in prioritizing how we address those. For example, we found a priority in Cook County is advocacy in criminal court partially due to the sheer volume of survivors and the inability to meet that need. In the Southern Region, transportation to safety is a priority because resources and populations are more scarce when compared to the square mileage of that region. The need for adequate physical and mental health services is statewide.

Providing a safe and secure home after experiencing domestic violence takes time and resources. Isolation, physical and mental scars, child trauma, and loss of support systems all take a toll. Escape doesn't happen overnight, especially when the resources she needs to find safety aren't accessible. Domestic violence agencies need more advocates to help break down the barriers prohibiting survivors from obtaining safety – not fewer advocates, which is the real impact of recent funding cuts.

However, domestic violence providers cannot close these gaps and end family violence alone. Addressing these needs requires the entire community to step up. We are asking our communities to speak out and clearly declare that domestic violence is unacceptable. Earlier in this report, we outlined our recommendations for how communities, government organizations, other not for profits, for profits, and individuals can step up and do their part to end family violence. Yes, we need more money, but money alone won't end family violence unless we all work together.

COLLABORATE WITH US. TRAIN WITH US. PARTNER WITH US TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.



BECOME A MEMBER OF ICADV, CHOOSE THE LEVEL THAT FITS BEST.

ICADV FRIEND

Requirements: An individual who supports the vision and mission of ICADV. Potential Friend members must review and sign ICADV's assurances document found at http://www.ilcadv.org/Get_Involved/JoinICADV/join_icadv.html.

Fee: \$25.00 per year

Benefits: Friends will receive information regarding trainings, public policy, newsletters and monthly electronic mailings.

ICADV COMMUNITY PARTNER

Requirements: Non-profits, for-profits, and government agencies that support the vision and mission of ICADV and are acceptable to local ICADV members. Potential Community Partner members must review and sign the assurances document found at http://www.ilcadv.org/Get_Involved/JoinICADV/join_icadv.html. This level of membership goes through a review process by the ICADV Membership Committee.

Fee: \$250.00 per year

Benefits: Community Partners will receive information regarding trainings, newsletters, public policy and by monthly electronic mailings. Community Partners receive up to \$100 worth of ICADV resources, chosen by the Community Partner and may sit on ICADV committees.

ICADV VOTING BOARD MEMBER

Requirements: Non-profits or for-profits that support the vision and mission of ICADV and are acceptable to local ICADV members. Potential Voting Board Members must review and sign our assurances document found at http://www.ilcadv.org/Get_Involved/JoinICADV/join_icadv.html. There are additional criteria that must be met for membership at this level.

This category is made up of two types:

- Domestic Violence Service Provider
- Partner Abuse Intervention Program

For more information on any level of membership email us at ilcadv@ilcadv.org and type membership in the subject line.

NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This edition of For Better Times is dedicated to the courageous families that are surviving in spite of the ongoing physical, emotional, sexual, financial violence they experience in their homes. I also want to honor the memory of those that have died at the hands of someone that was supposed to love them and to the friends and families left behind.

On October 1 we released a report that discusses 59 incidents that took the lives of 76 Illinoisans between June of 2009 and May of 2010. Women, children and men died in these incidents. Mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters and a few fathers. You can get the full report on our web site at www.ilcadv.org/june2010icadvdvhomicide-fullreport.pdf

We also released a 3 year survey of gaps in services needed by families to escape violence in their homes. These two reports indicate we still have a long way to go to create safe communities and safe homes. You can find this report at www.ilcadv.org/fromthefrontlines-fullrpt.pdf

I ask that you take time this month to consider who touches your life that is a victim of domestic violence. Is there anything you can do? Of course, you can donate money to the local domestic violence agency but there is much more you can do. Clean out your closet and donate those old clothes you no longer want. Talk to your co-worker about the repeated calls she is getting from her partner. Teach your children to resolve differences without hitting. Tell your football buddies you do not like the jokes that put people down. Talk to your elected officials about what they are doing to protect families. Talk to those in your church, synagogue or mosque about a project to support affordable, safe housing. Discuss in your civic club the possibility of participating in a court watch program.

The Vision of ICADV is to eliminate domestic violence across Illinois; ensure the safety of survivors, their access to services, and their freedom of choice; and to hold abusers accountable for the violence they perpetrate.

It will take each of us to end domestic violence. Please join us this month, this year in making our vision come true.

Vickie Smith

Executive Director
The Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence