

# ICADV's Economic Empowerment Project Update

Fall 2007

## Economic Advocacy Trainings for 2007/2008

### 2 Day Facilitator Training

In April of 2007, ICADV held its first Economic Empowerment Training in Springfield, with a second training held in the Chicago area in August. With two more scheduled for calendar year 2008, the trainings will consistently alternate between Springfield and the Chicago area.

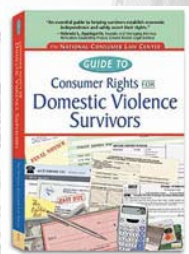
Advocates are trained in the Realizing your Economic Action Plan (REAP) curriculum developed by Redevelopment Opportunities for Women, Inc. (ROW) in St. Louis. For the last few years, ROW has been bringing their unique program to domestic violence advocates all over the country. This comprehensive economic curriculum is told through the lens of domestic violence, and consists of 4 sessions: Money & Power, Creating a Cost of Living Plan, Credit, and Investing and Banking. At the training, advocates participate in all four sessions and are then asked to facilitate a portion of the curriculum in small groups. The four sessions are structured to be used as group facilitations, however, programs have been able to adapt the curriculum to best fit the needs of their clients and agency.

### 1 Day Individual Advocacy Training

In October, ICADV will hold its first Individual Economic Advocacy Training. Once they have attended the two day REAP training, advocates are invited back to attend this second, one day training. This day is more focused on working with individual clients on things like budgeting and credit and is a more intensive follow-up to the information they have already received. This will provide advocates with the tools they need to work with women who need further financial assistance as well as help them develop individualized economic action plans.

## Economic Empowerment Project Regional Meetings

*Coming up:* ICADV will host regional meetings for advocates involved in the Economic Empowerment Project. Each meeting will have a specific topic (one directed by advocates and the needs they have encountered). However, it will also be a chance for advocates to come together and discuss things with each other. This is an opportunity to bring successes and concerns to their peers and to celebrate and problem solve as a team.



## Great Resource for Advocates

In 2006, the Consumer Rights Law Center published its latest edition of "Guide to Consumer Rights for Domestic Violence Survivors". This book is a great reference and resource for anyone working with domestic violence survivors. Some aspects of the REAP curriculum are taken directly from this book. Each program will receive two copies of the book, distributed to directors at the ICADV Board Retreat. ICADV will also have a copy available in our lending library.

## Feedback from Advocates & Survivors

*Thus far, the feedback from programs and advocates who have implemented REAP has been overwhelmingly positive. For many staff members, it is the kind of work they have been doing with survivors for years, but have never had the tools for. Others know that it is something they have needed for a long time.*

**To Date—At least half of the programs who attended the Spring REAP training have implemented the curriculum with survivors.**

Nearly every advocate who attended the REAP training reported using the knowledge immediately with individual clients. However, the feedback has been even stronger for those that have been able to facilitate groups. Below is feedback from two advocates, Alicia Carlton at Phase/WAVE in Rockford and Sr. Mary Ellen Miller at Quanada in Quincy.

*"Things went great for these first two sessions. One gal that has been in the class is very excited about everything that we have worked on so far. She only went through 8<sup>th</sup> grade in school and is working very hard right now to continue to educate herself. Now she is taking this step for herself to learn how to utilize and grow her resources. The other thing that I feel really stuck with the ladies was when we were talking about resources; when I spoke about time, health, energy, and knowledge being considered resources, they lit up. It was a powerful way to flip their thinking from 'I don't have resources like a car, money, a house, etc' to thinking about the resources they do have in a more useful and real way." - Alicia Carlton*

Quanada has been working with REAP for the past few weeks in their Shelter Program (they plan to expand later). DV Counselor Sr. Mary Ellen Miller has reported that she loves the discussion that comes from the women through the sessions and has even had a hard time moving into the next section because the talk was "meaty". As with shelter life, some women were leaving before the class was over, but asked for information they could take with them.





## Adapting REAP for Everyone

The first question that every program asks itself as it begins to implement REAP is how to make it work in their program and for their survivors. One of the greatest assets in this curriculum is that it is so easy to adapt to the individual needs of each program. Already, it has worked in emergency shelter, transitional shelter and in walk-in and outreach groups. While the model is to teach the four sessions in 2.5 hour blocks, this is flexible. There is already an outline in place on how to facilitate the program in six, 1.5-2 hour sessions or in eight, 1-1.5 hour sessions.

What this means is that REAP can be incorporated into ongoing groups or be part of a new series of groups. The flexibility allows it to be taught several times a week, once a week or even once every other week. It can be worked into a rotation of life skills classes. As the project moves forward, each program will discover how REAP works best for them and the women they work with.

## Ongoing Support for Advocates

One of the unique and most important parts of the ICADV Economic Empowerment Project is the level of ongoing support we can provide to programs. The role of the Economic Empowerment Project Manager is to assist programs in whatever way they need to best bring this knowledge to their survivors. So far, this has included site visits, many phone calls, and emails. Some programs have had mini-training sessions at their individual agency so that they can have even more advocates facilitating the curriculum. The Project Manager can sit in on a class, co-facilitate the first few, or can wait until the advocate feels more comfortable with the curriculum to schedule a visit. The Project Manager is also available for specific questions about the curriculum or about an economic issue facing a survivor. While she may not know the answer off the top of her head, she will do the research and get back to you. Her goal is to make your program successful and she will assist you in whatever way she can.



## Economic Empowerment Listserve

In the coming months, ICADV will create an Economic Empowerment Listserve. This will be an immediate way that advocates doing this work can share information, pose questions, and exchange ideas with one another.

## Feedback from Advocates about the REAP training

*So far, ICADV has held two Economic Empowerment trainings, both with great success. For the first training, 36 advocates from all over the state attended the training. At the second training in Palatine, 38 advocates attended. These 74 advocates represent 39 different domestic violence programs. This is a great start to bringing economic advocacy to the women of Illinois.*

*We asked advocates at our most recent training what the highlights of the training was for them. Here are a few of their answers:*

*"I am really excited to have a new skill and field of knowledge- I cannot wait to pass it on to my clients and further increase the level of advocacy I can provide them."*

*"Before I came to this training I was unsure of [the] content and was actually sure that I would be bored, but I wasn't. I was able to apply this information to my life which enabled me to know I could help others."*

*"Gaining the confidence to know I can have a conversation about money with clients."*

*"Before I came to this training I was unsure of content and scared of words. However, I loved it! I learned so many things that I never learned growing up."*

*"Learning more about money management to take back to the workplace to teach clients."*

*"Knowing that I can offer tools and resources to my coworkers and clients."*

*"The whole experience was fulfilling and personal."*

## Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence Economic Empowerment Project

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