

2010 Dallas County Community Plan – Domestic Violence Section –

2010 Dallas County Community Plan – Domestic Violence Section Committee Members

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Introduction

The purpose of the Dallas County Community Plan is to identify justice-related needs throughout Dallas County so gaps in services, existing programs, new initiatives and funding opportunities may be addressed and resources increased. In addition, the planning process encourages community inclusiveness and address non-justice functions such as transportation, housing, education, health, business, recreation and others having an impact on the justice system.

Dallas County

Dallas County is one of the largest counties in Texas. According the latest population estimates, 2,492,850 people reside in Dallas County. The County encompasses 23 municipalities with the City of Dallas being the largest city (1,316,350 – 2010). Population forecasts estimate a 27% increase in population from 2000 to 2030. Projections for the City of Dallas show an increase of the people of Hispanic origin to over 43% of the total population in 2025, from 23% in 2000 (Sources: Texas Data Center and Census).

Domestic Violence

For the purposes of this plan, domestic violence is defined as verbal/emotional, physical and sexual abuse towards a current or former intimate partner, dating partner, member of the same household or family member. The majority of domestic violence victims are victims of intimate partner violence.

2010 DALLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY PLAN – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SECTION

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HOUSING

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

Existing transitional housing, housing vouchers and low-income affordable housing are insufficient to serve the number of victims of family violence in Dallas County. Although family violence affects people of all social, economic, educational and ethnic backgrounds, the majority of homeless domestic violence victims served in Dallas County are females with children who are typically unemployed and either high school dropouts or high school graduates with little work experience. Poverty greatly affects the victim's ability to find safe housing.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

Finding safe affordable housing for victims of family violence is critical and the affordable housing situation in Dallas is of great concern. Victims are often unable to afford to pay rent or housing costs, further trapping them in dangerous situations.

What needs to be done to alleviate the problem?

Transitional housing programs must be expanded to give homeless families the support to promote self-sufficiency, safety and long-term independence from family violence by providing housing assistance, counseling, case management, training and supportive services to parents and children who are homeless due to family violence. The Dallas Housing Authority should prioritize victims of family violence and move these families to the top of the housing voucher waiting list. Truly affordable low income housing with stair step rental costs must be developed to alleviate the crisis that keeps families trapped in abusive homes.

Impact for Dallas County and Supporting Data

The total population for the service area of Dallas County is 2,257,694 with 14.6% or 329,623 families living below the poverty level and 17.0% or 383,808 individuals living below the poverty level (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

SUPPORTING DATA/DISCUSSION AND TRENDS

The 2009 Homeless Count found 5,675 people living on Dallas streets or in shelters, women and children to make up 63% of the homeless population on Dallas streets. Domestic

abuse/family problems were listed as the reason for homelessness by 32% of the population, up from 24% in 2008. The total population for the service area of Dallas County is 2,257,694 with 14.6% of families living below the poverty level and 17.0 % of individuals living below the poverty level. Economic stress increases the distress in fragile families. With the unemployment rate skyrocketing in Dallas County from 4.7 percent in March 2008 to 7.3 percent in March 2009, the need for serving these vulnerable populations also rises. In Dallas County, 9,190 households are currently in foreclosure, which equates to a 1.5% foreclosure rate.

“The demand for low-income affordable housing in Dallas far outweighs the supply of available units. The number of people or households waiting for a conventional public housing unit is almost 2 times the number of existing units. In other words, only about one third of the people or households requesting public housing are living in a public housing unit. Meanwhile, the Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly known as Section 8) has a waiting list equal to approximately the number of vouchers in use, meaning that only one half of the demand is being met. The Dallas Housing Authority (DHA) reports the following:

- As of March 21, 2006, the (closed) waiting list for the Housing Choice Voucher Program is 16,341 people or households.
- The number of Housing Choice Vouchers currently in use is 16,370.
- With the closing of the Housing Choice waitlist, the number of people or households on the waiting list for public housing has increased to 10,519, outnumbering occupied public housing units by almost 2 to 1.
- This number represents a 432% increase in the number of people or households on the waiting list for public housing since 1999.

According to the DHA, the typical length of time an individual or household remains on the waiting list for public housing is 2 years.” (Source – www.dallasindicators.org)

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

There are 5 family violence service providers that have a total of 244 transitional housing beds that can serve a total of 88 families in the Dallas County Continuum of Care. The average occupancy rate of these programs is 86%. Reasons for less than 100% occupancy rate are that some clients do not meet qualification guidelines and unfortunate timing in terms of availability vs. demand.

In the past 12 months, the Dallas area has utilized stimulus grant funding to help with rental assistance to prevent homelessness or re-house homeless individuals and families that are experiencing family violence. The Family Place has served as the clearing house for Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs rental assistance to agencies including Mosaic, Genesis Women’s Shelter, Dallas Metrocare, New Beginning Center, Child Abuse Prevention Center, and Child Protective Services/Rainbow Room. A total of 342 households have received rental assistance in the 12 month period. In addition, 161 households have received support through the City of Dallas rental assistance, of these 161 households, 96% make 0 – 30% of the Area Median Income.

In May of 2003, the Mayor’s Task Force on Affordable Housing spent eight weeks conducting 100 interviews to gain a greater understanding of the status and challenges of Dallas’ affordable housing efforts. A shortage in affordable housing of approximately 30,000 units was identified as a primary issue.

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

- Expansion of transitional housing programs
- Increased access to transitional housing programs for domestic violence victims
- Expansion of scope of qualifications in particular to special populations
- Additional qualified staff to support transitional housing programs
- Additional resources for programs to promote self-sufficiency, safety and long-term independence from family violence by providing housing assistance, counseling, case management, training and supportive services to parents and children
- Dallas Housing Authority’s prioritization of victims of family violence and move these families to the top of the housing voucher waiting list

EMERGENCY SHELTER

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

Dallas County receives approximately 20,000 reports of domestic violence each year but only has 239 domestic violence shelter beds. The numbers of women and children living on the streets due to domestic violence in the home is astounding. Without access to emergency shelters, victims of family violence and their children would not have the resources for immediate safety and intervention.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

Shelters are the primary life-saving resource for victims fleeing violence. Without adequate shelter resources, victims would face continued life-threatening violence or homelessness. Currently, existing shelters are struggling to meet budgetary demands to maintain the current level of services and are faced with economic uncertainty and rising costs as well as increased family violence incidents in the county.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

Dallas County family violence shelters need the financial resources to maintain their current facilities and personnel, and to meet the rising costs associated with these services. Therefore, it is imperative that Dallas County continue to work to ensure that area shelters are able to continue providing this life-saving resource without disruption.

Impact for Dallas County

With adequate resources and qualified staff domestic violence shelters in Dallas County will continue to provide life-saving interventions and provide immediate access to emergency shelter to a larger number of victims who would otherwise have no place else to go. This will decrease the imminent risk for further injury or death for women and children in Dallas County, attempting to flee from their abusive home.

SUPPORTING DATA

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of FV reports in Dallas County*	22,488	21,294	21,725	19,859
Number of women killed by an intimate partner in Dallas County**	15	11	14	9
Victims of FV homeless ***	n/d	n/d	611	772
Number of emergency shelter beds for family violence victims ****	269	269	269	239
Number of FV victims (adult and children) receiving emergency shelter ****	1,935	2,449	2,391	2,160

* This data was obtained from the Texas Department of Public Safety’s Annual Crime in Texas Report

** Data obtained from Texas Council on Family Violence

*** Data from Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance’s Point-in-Time Homeless Count for 2008, 2009. No data available for 2006 and 2007.

**** Data obtained from the following agencies with emergency shelter beds for victims of family violence: Brighter Tomorrows, The Family Place, Mosaic Family Services, New Beginning Center, and Salvation Army

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

Since 2006 more than 21,000 reports of family violence have occurred annually in Dallas County, and more than 11 women have been killed by an intimate partner annually over this period. According to the 2010 homeless count, 5,750 individuals were homeless in Dallas County at the time of the count, of which 2,702 were women and children. Results from this survey indicated that being a victim of family violence was the fourth leading cause of homelessness among the respondents (825 individuals). More over, the local family violence shelters listed above have provided emergency shelter for more than 1,900 adults and children annually from 2006 through 2009 while the number of shelter beds decreased in 2009. In 2009, one Dallas County shelter reported more clients turned away than they were able to serve. Also, due tot the economic crisis, one Dallas County agency had to close one of their emergency shelters. All of these factors demonstrate the persistent need within the community for victims to have access to emergency shelter.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Dallas County currently has a total of 239* beds for victims of domestic violence. There are six family violence shelters including:

- Genesis Women’s
- The Family Place
- New Beginning Center
- Brighter Tomorrows

Mosaic Family Services

Salvation Army

** 2010 data regarding shelter beds was obtained from The Family Place, New Beginning Center, Brighter Tomorrows, Mosaic Family Services, and Salvation Army.*

Non-family violence shelters include:

The Bridge

Dallas Life Foundation

Austin Street Shelter

Family Gateway

Promise House (Adolescents only)

Salvation Army

Union Gospel Mission

YMCA Casa Shelter (Adolescents only)

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

- More beds for women and children
- Expand services and space to large families in particular with adolescent boys, victims of family violence other than intimate partner violence, victims with special needs, such as mental health, substance abuse, special health needs, and victims from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds; including specialized staff to deal with these special needs
- Adequate numbers of qualified Spanish-speaking staff

COUNSELING AND SUPPORT GROUPS

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

Many adult and child victims of domestic and sexual violence in Dallas County do not require emergency shelter services, but do need counseling and support group intervention to address the impact of the violence. According to the survey conducted by the domestic violence task force of Dallas County in 2002, support groups were listed as number three in the top five things that can be done to prevent domestic violence in Dallas County.

According to 2006 census data, the largest ethnic group in Dallas County was Latino (over 31%) and over half that was foreign-born, hence, Spanish-speaking [Solis, Diane. August 15, 2008. Dallas County addresses rise in foreign-born Latino population. *Dallas Morning News*]. According to the Texas Council on Family Violence, 77% of all Hispanic Texans indicate that they, a family member and/or a friend have experienced some form of domestic violence (<http://new.abanet.org/domesticviolence/Pages/Statistics.aspx>). Given these alarming statistics, attention must be given to providing individual and group counseling in Spanish, as well.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

Domestic violence is known to result in homelessness, school problems, incarceration, a decline in mental and physical health, increased utilization of welfare programs, and murder-suicides. Domestic violence victims are far more likely to become homeless (Dallas Homeless Survey Summary, 2002) than those not involved in domestic violence.

In 2009, over half of the homeless population in Dallas County were women and children. (2009 Homeless Count, Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance). Nationwide, more than 92% of all homeless mothers have reported experiencing severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetime, about 2/3 of this abuse being intimate partner violence. [Bassuk, EL et al. (1996). The characteristics and needs of sheltered homeless and low-income housed mothers. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 276(8): 640-646.]

Youth raised in violent homes have a 74% higher likelihood of committing criminal assaults (Survey of Massachusetts Department of Youth Services).

What needs to be done to alleviate the problem?

Counseling provides victims with an understanding of how physical and sexual violence has impacted their lives. Support groups help break the isolation barrier so these victims do not feel

alone. Without this counseling victims are more likely to return to the batterer and are less likely to gain a sense of control over their lives.

One survivor in the Heart to Heart Support Network explained why women don't leave their abusers, "Since one of the major components of abuse is isolation, we [*battered women*] often lack a support system. Our family ties and friendships have been destroyed, leaving us psychologically and financially dependent on our abusive partner." (<http://www.heart-2-heart.ca/women/page4.htm>).

Counseling helps provide victims safety and improved quality of life. The goal, as well as consistent outcome, of support groups is to bridge the victim out of such isolation into a world of emotional support and practical resources. Once connected, victims often find both the courage and the means to get out and stay out of abuse, breaking the cycle of violence and abuse for themselves and their children.

The process of "breaking the silence" and speaking openly about violent events in the home serves children as well. Children in homes where domestic violence is the norm often feel isolated, unable to invite friends over or associate freely with others. Individual and group counseling for children and youth allow them to reduce their sense of isolation, begin the emotionally healing process, and learn how to not repeat the destructive patterns of their parents/caregivers.

SUPPORTING DATA

Minimum Age	14	<i>Victim Gender</i>	
Maximum Age	68	Female	120
Average Age	36.13		
<i>Children</i>		<i>Cause of Death</i>	
Children Killed	6	Shot	76
Children who Lost Parents	77	Stabbed	17
		Strangled	12
<i>Relation to Perpetrator</i>		Beaten with Hands	9
Wife	51	Weapon Used	2
Girlfriend	29	Other	3
Common law wife	15		
Estranged wife	12	<i>Victim Race</i>	
Ex-girlfriend	9	Anglo/Caucasian	51
Ex-wife	4	Hispanic	40
<i>Nature of Death</i>		African American	21
Homicide	77	Asian	4
Murder-suicide	43	Unknown	4

Chart 1: Women Killed by Their Intimate Partner in Texas 2006.

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

As seen in Chart 1 from the Texas Council on Family Violence, domestic abuse left unaddressed has serious consequences.

However, studies have shown that when women participate in survivor support groups that focus on matters such as safety planning, mutual support and acceptance, definitions of abuse, network-building and learning about community and legal resources, the participants show increased personal control, self-esteem, and utilization of community resources, and a reduction in the dynamics of domestic abuse. (Tuty et al, 1993; Constantino & Crane, 2005; Williamson & Abrahams, 2010).

The difference between the child and the adult victim is that the adult is, at least to some extent, a fully developed person who is physically equipped to take care of their own basic survival needs. The adult has the tools of language and reason available for the purpose of making sense of a difficult experience and for meeting emotional needs through connecting with, and asking for, support from others. Adult victims of domestic violence, as a rule, are well aware of their need to “talk out” these issues with either trained counselors or in support groups with others who have similar experiences. Children, on the other hand, are less equipped and are severely impacted, not only by direct physical abuse, but even by witnessing physical violence against a parent. Given the negative repercussions particular to children’s exposure to domestic violence, there is a need for individual and group counseling programs that specifically target their needs and capacity.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

According to a survey conducted in October 2010, the following adult and child victims were provided individual and group counseling services at domestic violence agencies.

	2007	2008	2009
Number of adults receiving individual or group counseling [#]	2,993	2,698	2,826
Number of children receiving individual or group counseling [*]	1,000	902	1,134

[#] Data Source: Numbers obtained from Genesis Women’s Shelter, The Family Place, Mosaic Family Services, and Brighter Tomorrows.

^{*} Data Source: Numbers obtained from The Family Place, Mosaic Family Services, and Brighter Tomorrows.

Domestic violence agencies provide individual and group counseling services to a large number of adult and child victims in Dallas County, but are still not able to meet the current need. Many victims are not adequately served and/or are placed on a wait list for services. There is

particular need for increased counseling services in Spanish, and increased individual services for adult and child victims.

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

- Additional qualified and/or licensed professionals to provide individual counseling for adult victims and children in order to eliminate waitlist
- Additional qualified and/or licensed professionals who are linguistically and culturally competent to provide individual counseling for victims with special language and other needs
- Additional qualified staff to provide support groups for victims
- More services provided in specific geographic locations that are on bus routes and easily accessible for victims
- Staff to provide quality child care services when mothers attend support groups or counseling sessions
- Qualified staff to provide support group and individual counseling services to GLBTQ victims.

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VICTIM ADVOCACY AND CASE MANAGEMENT

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

There is a lack of well-trained and qualified victim advocates that serve the needs of the large numbers of domestic violence victims in Dallas County. The nature of assistance falls into two categories: advocacy and case-management provided by advocates who work for community-based domestic violence agencies; and legal advocacy provided by victim advocates who work from within the criminal justice system. In order for victims of domestic violence to be able to safely escape the abuse, be self-sufficient and heal from the trauma, they require compassionate assistance with accessing a variety of services. Services generally include shelter and housing, crisis support and counseling, financial and educational resources, as well as services for children; victims need clear and detailed information about the civil and criminal justice process, their rights as victims, and options available to them. Dallas County does not have enough domestic violence advocates to meet this need. There is also a continuing need for advocates to provide services that are culturally and linguistically specific to the growing immigrant and non-English speaking population of victims of family violence.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

Due to the heavily populated urban and suburban areas of Dallas County, the number of domestic violence victims is high. Victims generally come into contact with resources through receiving assistance at domestic violence agencies, or through receiving information from the justice system. Victims need information about the criminal justice system, crisis intervention and counseling, local resource information and referrals, and a safe and supportive atmosphere. Without assistance from advocates in the community, victims lack information about their safety-options and lack access to community resources relevant to their financial independence and empowerment. Without compassionate support and access to resources, victims face an increased risk for further violence.

Without criminal justice based advocates, victims lack information about their rights as crime victims. Victims on criminal cases or applicants for a Protective Order lack a trusted link to the courts that ensures that their voices are heard. In the civil and criminal justice system, lack of legal advocacy may lead to decisions that do not take into consideration the safety of the victim, and the offender is less likely to be held accountable. The complex nature of abuse requires careful and time-intensive preparation for prosecution, and there is an enormous lack of

qualified advocates that are adequately trained and linguistically competent to meet the complex emotional and safety needs of victims.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

Dallas County requires additional resources to fund quality family violence victim advocates working within the community and within the criminal justice system that are linguistically and culturally competent and are able to devote time to assist each victim with their unique emotional, safety and financial needs, including appropriate resources and referrals.

Impact for Dallas County

Criminal justice based victim advocates build relationships with victims and collaborate with prosecutors, law enforcement officers and other allied professionals and provide victims with access to information, community resources and participation in the legal system. This gives victims the ability to choose from a menu of safety options and services that may assist them with gaining financial stability, self-sufficiency and healing from the abuse. 1/ In the legal system, victims' greater access to information, resources and the legal process often results in a more effective outcome of prosecution. 2/ Qualified legal advocates ensure that emotional needs of victims in crisis are met, and that the practical needs and safety of the victim are taken into consideration. This ultimately increases the victims' safety and accountability of the batterer. 3/ Further, the availability of advocates builds the victim's trust in the system which will make it more likely that the victim will access community resources and the legal system again in the future.

Community based victim advocates assist victims with a variety of case management needs and can do so on a long-term basis. These victim advocates provide victims with accompaniment to systems and processes outside of the criminal justice system, and have the ability to provide long-term solutions to victims' needs such as housing, employment, transportation, legal services, child care, etc. Qualified victim advocates provide victims with a voice and help them gain access to the legal system and community services by serving as a link to the allied professions and the legal system, and providing education on domestic violence and its impact on the victim. With quality, culturally and linguistically competent advocacy and case management support, victims of domestic violence are more likely to access the resources that they need to keep themselves and their children safe from the abuser, be self-sufficient and ultimately heal from the trauma.

SUPPORTING DATA

<u>Dallas County Criminal Justice System^</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
New FV Offenses Reported in Dallas County	22,488	21,294	21,725	n/a
New FV Assault-Citations Filed (Class C – City of Dallas)				
New FV Misdemeanor Offenses Filed (Class A and B)	5,193	4,754	4,836	4,171
New FV Felony Offenses Filed	1,612	1,689	1,565	1,776
Number of Protective Orders Filed	851	1003	894	523”
Number of FV Victims Requesting Assistance from DA	13,500”	8,952	7,854	7,438

^Data Sources: Texas Department of Public Safety – Uniform Crime Report 2008

Dallas County District Attorney’s Office, Family Violence Division

“ The number of Protective Orders filed decreased due to a greater complexity of the Protective Order application process; steps have been taken to counteract this trend. The great drop in Number of FV Victims Requesting Assistance from 2006 to 2007 is due to a change in data collection methods from calculating estimates to more accurate numbers.

<u>Domestic Violence Programs in Dallas County*</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
Number of Residential Adult Clients			
Receiving Advocacy and Case Management	2,449	2,391	2,160
Number of Non-Residential Adult Clients			
Receiving Advocacy and Case Management	3,573	3,258	3,404

*Data Sources: Brighter Tomorrows, Genesis Women’s Shelter, Mosaic Family Services, The Family Place.

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

The *Texas Summary of the 2009 Domestic Violence Counts: A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services* identified that 4,345 victims and their children received individual support and advocacy throughout the State of Texas on September 15, 2009. 2,661 victims from throughout Texas received court accompaniment and advocacy on that same day.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Criminal Justice System

The following criminal justice based agencies provide specialized advocacy and assistance to victims of domestic violence by having specialized staff to provide victim contact including information about the criminal justice process, safety-planning, resources and referrals:

There are 12 full-time Family Violence Victim Caseworkers at the District Attorney's Office in the Misdemeanor, Felony, Sexual Assault and Protective Order Units.

There are 2 full-time Domestic Violence Victim Advocates at the Dallas City Attorney's Office Domestic Violence Unit.

There are 3 full-time Domestic Violence Counselors at the Family Violence Unit of the Dallas Police Department.

There is 1 full-time Domestic Violence Counselor in the Family Advocacy Center of the Irving Police Department.

Community-based Agencies

Among domestic violence services providers there are often not enough advocates on staff due to a lack of resources. This gap results in advocacy services being performed by counselors, therapists and other staff. The following community based agencies provide specialized advocacy and case management to victims of domestic violence in Dallas County:

Victim advocates and case managers that provide services such as legal advocacy, parenting classes, life skills classes, and referrals in such areas as: housing, employment, childcare, training, governmental resources, etc. are at Genesis Women's Shelter, New Beginning Center, Mosaic Family Services, The Family Place, VIP/Rape Crisis and Brighter Tomorrows.

Coalitions and Coordinated Response

Several Dallas County coalitions work to connect victim advocates (and other professionals) and improve the coordinated community response to domestic violence from the advocacy perspective.

Dallas County Domestic Violence Awareness Coalition (DVAC) - The mission of DVAC is to raise awareness in our community, build relationships to improve collaboration among services providers, and provide a common voice in the coordinated community response to domestic violence in Dallas County.

Latinos Against Domestic Violence (LADV) – The mission of LADV is to promote the elimination of domestic violence in the Latino community through educational outreach and the encouragement of personal development toward self-sufficiency and self-confidence.

LGBT Coalition – The mission of the LGBT Coalition is to bring awareness about LGBT domestic violence/intimate partner violence by creating relationships with concerned community businesses, social service agencies, and community members. The goals of the LGBT Coalition are to support the LGBT community by providing education about LGBT family violence, to advocate for survivors of LGBT related family violence and to facilitate support for survivors by collaborating with appropriate agencies.

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

Dallas County requires additional advocacy and case management resources for victims of domestic violence in the following areas:

1/ Staff needs – there are not sufficient family violence victim advocates working within the community and within the criminal justice system are able to devote time to assist each victim with their unique emotional, safety and financial needs, including appropriate resources and referrals; there is not sufficient culturally and linguistically competent staff, and staff that can address victims with increased barriers or special needs such as immigration, substance abuse, mental health issues, disabilities, etc.

2/ Training needs – due to the high caseloads many victim advocates and case managers carry, their ability to attend and seek a variety of training opportunities is limited.

FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

Lack of financial resources is one of the most common barriers to victims of domestic violence staying in, or returning to, abusive relationships. In fact, abused women frequently cite financial fears as the number one reason for staying in or returning to an abusive relationship.¹

In order to escape from an abusive relationship, victims of domestic violence need financial independence and economic security: the availability of a steady and reliable source of income to sustain daily living.²

When victims of family violence lack the financial resources for childcare or have limited access to childcare assistance they are unable to seek or find employment to gain economic self sufficiency. They may feel forced to remain in violent relationships or find themselves homeless, exposing themselves and their children to further danger.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

A high percentage of victims return to their abuser due to lack of financial resources and financial dependence on the abuser. Education and training to build financial independence skills are not currently being addressed for victims seeking counseling, shelter or services from all domestic violence programs.

Returning to, and remaining in domestic violence relationships puts women and their children in danger. In addition, remaining in domestic violence relationships is a financial drain to the economy with high medical costs (often County Hospital Services), lost days of productivity, and costs to public assistance programs.

Without resources for affordable childcare victims of domestic violence may not be able to gain financial independence from their abuser because they are unable to find or maintain employment. Lack of financial independence from the abuser may subject the victim to further emotional and physical violence. Child care is not optional for clients who are trying to gain control over their lives and pursue a livelihood. In order to train for employment or work they must know that their children are being cared for in a safe environment. Again, this becomes a major challenge for those without financial resources.

¹ Allstate Foundation, Moving Ahead Through Financial Management, 2007

² Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Economic Justice, www.pcadv.org

What needs to be done to alleviate the problem?

According to a survey conducted in 2002 by the Dallas County Domestic Violence Focus Group, one of the gaps not adequately addressed for victims of domestic violence is information, resources and financial assistance related to training and education for employment.³ This need for increased financial independence remains in 2010.

To adequately address the needs of this population, victims need:

- Education (e.g., GED classes, ESL classes, access to higher education)
- Opportunities for employment (e.g., job training classes, job placement, career counseling, partnerships with Texas Workforce and local employers, Internet access for job searches)
- Opportunities to create assets (e.g. economic literacy, including financial planning, budgeting, and debt management skills; microloans; individual development accounts)
- Access to governmental assistance (e.g., TANF, WIC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, unemployment benefits, childcare financial assistance, housing vouchers, child support enforcement)
- Transportation (e.g. DART Day Pass bus vouchers, taxi vouchers for those victims outside of DART service areas, personal vehicles and auto maintenance services for victims)
- Dallas County needs additional resources to provide affordable to no cost childcare assistance to victims of domestic violence.

Impact for Dallas County

The costs of remaining in domestic violence relationships affect all areas of the Dallas County economy, such as cost of health care in emergency room visits, cost of police protection and criminal justice services, etc. Domestic violence has an adverse affect on children, and is a strong risk factor for behavioral and educational difficulties in school, as well as potential violent or anti-social behavior in later life. If victims can adequately provide for themselves and their children, it is possible that the violent crime rate would decline, as well as the cost of these children becoming part of the increasing jail population. Providing victims affordable childcare assistance will improve the victim's ability to achieve financial independence and self sufficiency. Additionally, financial independence and asset control can give women greater bargaining power within households and help protect against the risk of domestic violence.⁴

³ Dallas County Comprehensive Community Plan, Domestic Violence Section, NCTCOG, 2003

⁴ Pradeep Panda, Domestic Violence and Women's Property Ownership; Delving Deeper into the Linkages in Kerala, 2007

SUPPORTING DATA

Dallas County Profile⁵

Poverty - 2008 (Census Bureau)	
Percent of Population in Poverty:	17.3%
Percent of Population under 18 in Poverty:	25.5%
Annual Unemployment Rate, Not Adjusted (Texas Workforce Commission)	
Unemployment Rate - 2009:	8.2
Unemployment Rate - 2008:	5.5
Unemployment Rate - 2007:	4.7
Unemployment Rate - 2006:	5.2

Dallas County Percent of Total Household Population⁶

	2002	2007
Family Households	65.8%	65.9%
Married-Couple Family	46.9%	39.0%
Male Householder, No Wife Present	n/a	6.0%
Male Householder, With Own Children Under 18	n/a	3.4%
Female Householder, No Husband Present	13.0%	14.9%
Female Householder, With Own Children Under 18	8.9%	10.7%

Children on State Subsidized Childcare⁷

2004	2005	2006	2007
4.9%	4.9%	4.8%	4.8%

According to the National Association of Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies:

1. The average annual fees paid for full-time center care for an infant is \$7176.⁸

⁵ From Texas Association of Counties: Online Resources, Dallas County Profile, <http://www.txcip.org/tac/census/profile.php?FIPS=48113>

⁶ United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, Community Needs Assessment, Education Supporting Data, 2009

⁷ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, Dallas County, 2009 <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/stateprofile.aspx?state=TX&loc=6571>

2. The average annual fees paid for full-time center care for 4-year old is \$6084.¹
3. Median annual family income of single parent (female headed) families with children under 18 is \$22,125.⁹

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

Dallas County children and women are at great risk for poverty, with 25.5% of children living in poverty, and 17.3% of the Dallas County general population. From 2002 to 2007, the number of female head of households with children under 18 years old increased by nearly 26%.¹⁰

According to a survey conducted by the Domestic Violence Focus Group, a high percentage of domestic violence victims (estimated at 80% of clients in outreach and shelter services) return to their abuser because of financial dependence. Victims stated in the survey that they lack employment opportunities that would adequately meet the basic financial needs for themselves and their children. Many of these clients stated that they had been out of work for a long period of time (often as a result of the abuse), have never been employed, or do not have the skills and education to financially support a family.

Similarly, the survey determined that less than 20% of victims seeking shelter have their own vehicle (approximately 18%), which further limits their abilities to seek employment and financial independence.¹¹

Childcare is needed for employment and to search for employment, yet less than 5% of children are on state subsidized childcare. Additionally, childcare vouchers are typically only provided when the parent is working, but the parent also needs childcare in order to find employment.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Transitional housing programs for victims of domestic violence exist at Brighter Tomorrows, Mosaic Family Services, The Family Place, Genesis, New Beginning Center, Family Gateway, and Interfaith Housing. These programs offer opportunities to obtain job skills and education, in addition to housing, transportation, and childcare. The client must have first been in a shelter and apply and be accepted to participate in this type of supportive living program. There are specific criteria in order to be accepted to these programs, and the number of clients served is limited.

⁸ Data provided by the State CCR&R Network and are derived from CCR&R data. Some states reported based on their state latest market rate survey.

⁹ From the 2007 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov).

¹⁰ United Way of Greater

¹¹ Dallas County Comprehensive Community Plan, Domestic Violence Section, NCTCOG, 2003

Outreach and shelter staff at most domestic violence agencies provide case management services, including linkages to public assistance and transportation, but additional services are needed to help victims access education, opportunities for job training and placement, and opportunities to create assets.

Currently, victims of domestic violence who are homeless or at risk of homelessness can obtain rental assistance and financial literacy skills through The Family Place and in partnership with other local domestic violence agencies. However, this assistance is time-limited, provided through stimulus funds that will terminate in **fiscal year 2012**.

General Childcare assistance in Dallas County is provided by the ChildCareGroup and Vogel Alcove, both serving low-income populations. The only domestic violence agency that provides licensed child care on-site (at emergency shelter) is The Family Place.

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

Resource Needs

For victims of domestic violence to achieve financial independence, they need comprehensive services and resources, including:

- Education (e.g., GED classes, ESL classes, access to higher education, including scholarships and financial aid)
- Opportunities for job employment (e.g., job training classes, job placement, career counseling, job fairs, partnerships with Texas Workforce and local employers, Internet access for job searches)
- Opportunities to create assets (e.g. economic literacy, including financial planning, budgeting, and debt management skills; microloans; individual development accounts-IDAs)
- Access to governmental assistance (e.g., TANF, WIC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, unemployment benefits, childcare financial assistance, housing vouchers, child support enforcement)
- Transportation (e.g. DART Day Pass bus vouchers, taxi vouchers for those victims outside of DART service areas, personal vehicles and auto maintenance services for victims)

Staff Needs

- Victims need specially trained professionals who can assist them in pursuing vocational training/employment opportunities, obtaining scholarships/financial aid for training and higher education, and building money management skills.

- Victims need case managers who can help remove barriers and access and/or complete applications for governmental assistance, including TANF, WIC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, unemployment benefits, childcare financial assistance, housing vouchers, child support enforcement, etc.

Training Needs

- Staff and volunteers in domestic violence and community agencies need training on the impact of economic abuse and financial dependency on victims of domestic violence, as well as training on effective strategies to increase victims' financial independence.
- Staff and volunteers need training on financial literacy and economic skills, including budgeting, money management, debt management skills; individual development accounts (IDAs); and opportunities for microloans, so they can provide accurate information and guidance to victims of domestic violence.
- Qualified child care providers and agencies.

Equipment Needs

- Victims need safe personal vehicles, including funds for insurance, repairs, and gas. Similarly, domestic violence agencies need vehicles to transport victims when other forms of transportation do not meet the victims' needs.
- Victims and domestic violence agencies need computers with Internet access to allow victims to safely seek job opportunities, to access education, and to apply for community and governmental resources.

Program Needs

- Childcare vouchers are needed allow victims to seek employment, access governmental assistance, and attend school.
- Bus passes and taxi vouchers are needed to provide to victims without personal vehicles who need to access services.
- Domestic violence victims and agencies need active partnerships with community agencies to support education, employment and financial skills, and partnerships with local businesses and employers to work with and offer opportunities to victims of domestic violence.

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEES SERVICES

PROBLEM

What is the problem in Dallas County?

The immigrant population in North Texas continues to grow, and immigrant victims of family violence face many obstacles when trying to flee abuse. Due to cultural differences, lack of knowledge about the U.S. legal system, fear of authority, and limited English, violence against refugee and immigrant women is seriously underreported. Immigrants must overcome many barriers to achieve safety and self-sufficiency, and they often lack the resources and education needed. Immigrants are often marginalized and isolated, and may be completely unaware of domestic violence services in the community.

Immigrant victims of domestic violence may have significant language and cultural barriers that impede their ability to seek help, as well as a lack of awareness or understanding about their rights in the U.S. or knowledge about who to turn to for help with their situation. Although refugee and immigrant victims of domestic violence share the same needs as the mainstream victims of domestic violence, refugee and immigrant victims require specialized services and support.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

With the expansion of diversity of the population, there is a need to recognize the cultural and language barriers and to understand ways to assist these populations adequately. Immigrants and refugees are particularly vulnerable to abuse. People in these communities may come from countries with no laws against domestic violence and child abuse, or countries who do not enforce the laws that they do have. This can make violence in these homes more acceptable. In immigrant homes, where family cohesion and togetherness is valued above an individual's desires, escaping an abusive relationship becomes much more difficult. This view of the family being more important than the individual can also result in enforcing an abuser's behavior.

There is a shortage of culturally and linguistically competent caseworkers to help immigrants who may not seek services for fear it may negatively affect their immigration status.

Due to the lack of professional interpreters, information needed by police officers in a domestic violence case is sometimes gathered from the abusive partner, his extended family or the victim's children.

Law enforcement officials need to be aware of special issues present with immigrant victims of domestic violence. Fear of authority may be prevalent and many of these victims fled repressive regimes in which government was the main perpetrator of violence. Many victims are told if they file a complaint, they will be deported.

There is also a lack of the number of attorneys who provide low cost or free immigration and family law assistance for immigrants and refugees who are victims of domestic violence.

There is a dire lack of long-term housing for those who are waiting to become legal through a VAWA self-petition or U-Visa. They are not eligible for federal housing assistance because they are not legal residents. Refugee and immigrant victims of domestic violence struggle to find permanent housing after fleeing abusive relationships. Unfortunately, for many of them, the inability to obtain affordable housing may mean that they must choose between life with their abuser or life on the streets for themselves and their children. Helping victims remain safe and stable over time is critical; victims of domestic violence often return to their abusers because they cannot find long-term housing. Without such housing resources, many families face homelessness after they leave emergency shelters; more than 50% of homeless women and children are homeless because they are fleeing domestic violence. As long-term housing options become scarcer, battered women are staying longer in emergency domestic violence shelters. As a result, shelters are frequently full and must turn families away.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

- Increase the number of culturally sensitive and linguistically competent caseworkers.
- Training for police/law enforcement to work with victims from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds and who face additional barriers due to immigration or refugee status.
- Resources for professional interpretation on all levels of the legal system and social services provision.
- Increase the number of attorneys providing low cost or free services and are cognizant of the implication of actions on their client's immigration status
- Trainings to educate housing providers and domestic violence victims' advocates on how they can help immigrant/refugee victims facing housing crises.

- To develop a continuum of care regarding housing needs of immigrant/refugee battered women and their children from emergency shelters to transitional housing to permanent, affordable housing.

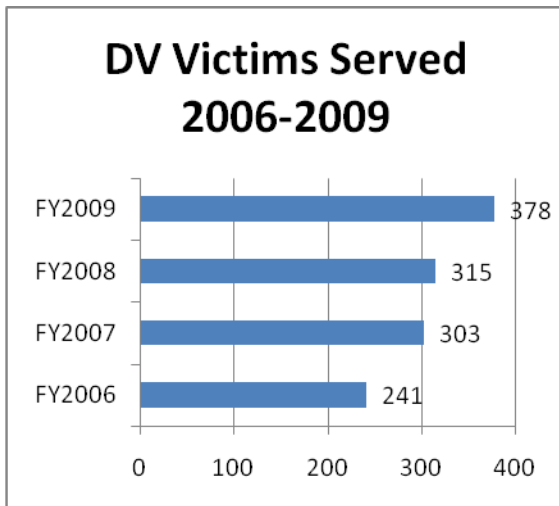
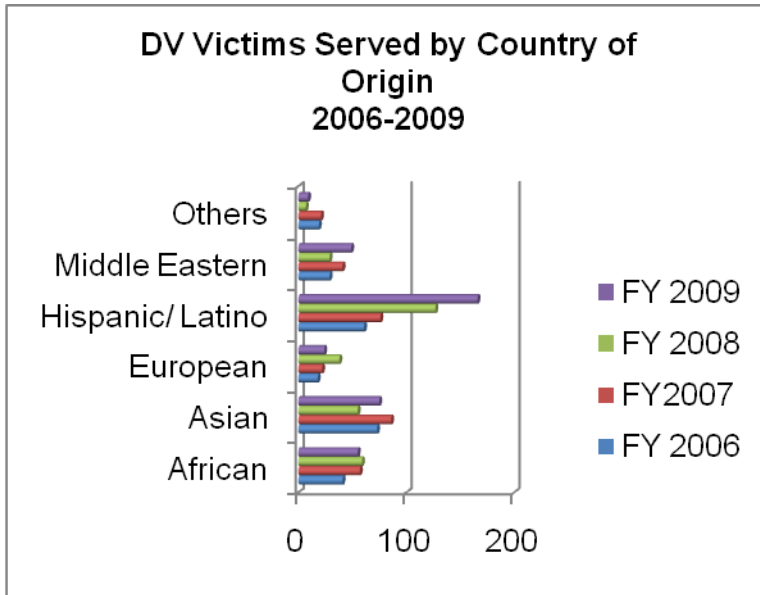
Impact for Dallas County

Adding and improving services to address the unique issues faced by immigrant victim would aid in transition to economic self sufficiency. Family violence costs employers in Dallas County millions of dollars a year in health care premiums and lost productivity through sick days and turnover. Moreover, family violence represents a significant workplace safety risk. Helping immigrant victims with domestic violence services benefits the County.

SUPPORTING DATA/DISCUSSION AND TRENDS

North Texas has one of the largest metropolitan concentrations of immigrant communities in the nation according to DFW International. The U.S. Census reported that 1 in 5 residents of Dallas County, 1 in 6 residents of Collin County, and 1 in 7 residents of Tarrant County are foreign-born. Domestic violence within immigrant and refugee groups is as prevalent as in the majority community, where over 40,000 family violence reports were made in Dallas, Collin, Denton, Tarrant and Rockwall Counties in 2008. The 2008 United Way of Metropolitan Dallas Needs Assessment reports that the number of women killed by their intimate partner increased by 50% from 2002 to 2006 in Dallas County. A 2004 study by the New York City Dept. of Health found that foreign-born women are more likely to be killed by their intimate partners than their American counterparts. According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, hotline calls from the North Texas region increased by 7% from 2007 to 2008 (from 8,230 calls to 8,803 calls). These numbers still do not reflect the true needs of immigrant women, who are much less likely to access family violence services from traditional agencies. With the expansion of diversity of the population, there is a need to recognize the cultural and language barriers and to understand ways to assist these populations adequately. This startling statistic shows the need for available and effective services for multicultural clients.

Mosaic Family Services, Inc. is the only shelter in the North Texas, designed to meet the needs of underserved immigrant/refugee victims of domestic violence. Since 2006, the agency has served 1237 victims. Please see the charts below for the breakdown of the countries of origin, gender, and numbers per fiscal year.



Between 2006 and 2009, Mosaic Family Services served 1,198 adult female victims, 18 adult male victims, and 21 minors who were direct victims of domestic violence.

Reporting of abuse from immigrant and refugee communities has shown a steady increase as awareness through outreach and education grows.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Refugee and immigrant victims who require linguistically and culturally specialized services will be referred to Mosaic Family Services where a case manager who speaks their language or is from a similar background will be assigned to work with the victim.

Public awareness and trainings regarding domestic violence dynamics, symptomatology, referral protocol, cultural diversity and reporting requirements are provided to medical and

health professionals, law enforcement, religious institution, social service providers, as well as different refugee's and immigrant's groups.

Although many community agencies provide services for abused women of the majority population and the larger minority groups - African-American and Hispanic - culturally and linguistically sensitive services targeting the other ethnic, cultural, and linguistic minorities are extremely limited.

Domestic Violence Shelters

Full Services for Refugee and Immigrant Population

Mosaic Family Services

24 Hour Crisis Hotline: 214.823.4434

Limited Services for Refugee and Immigrant Population

Brighter Tomorrows

24 Hours Crisis Hotline: 972.262.8383

Genesis Women's Shelter

24 Hours Crisis Hotline: 214.946.4357

New Beginning Center

24 Hours Crisis Hotline: 972.276.0057

The Family Place

24 Hours Crisis Hotline: 214.941.1991

Counseling (in different languages)

Mosaic Family Services

Phone Number: 214.821.5393

The Family Place Latina Program

Phone Number: 214.443.7704

Victim Intervention Program/Rape Crisis

24 Hour Crisis Hotline: 214.590.0430

Legal Services – specialized in Immigration Law

Mosaic Family Services – Family Law and Immigration Law

Phone Number: 214.821.5393

Catholic Charities – Immigration Law

Phone Number: 214.634.7182

Human Rights Initiative of North Texas, Inc

Phone Number: 214.855.0520

Outreach:

Brighter Tomorrows

Genesis Women’s Shelter

Mosaic Family Services

New Beginning Center

Texas Muslim Women’s Foundation

The Family Place

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

The goal is to promote and advocate for greater awareness and confidence among women of underserved ethnic, cultural, and language minority populations, thus reducing and preventing domestic violence and enabling them to live healthy lives free from abuse. Immigrants are not comfortable requesting help unless the staff speaks their language and is familiar with their culture. When the staff member is from a background a client can identify with, the staff member has more success in building rapport with families and providing impactful services. This has resulted in intervention with families who could not be reached otherwise. The National Domestic Violence Hotline Decade for Change Summit Report (2007) asserts that “the success of intervention efforts hinges on whether individuals interacting with those involved in domestic violence demonstrate appropriate sensitivity to the challenges facing victims as they seek to address the violence plaguing their lives.”

The following objectives/needs serve to meet this goal:

- Linguistically and culturally appropriate services. Hire culturally and linguistically competent bilingual case managers from many of the ethnic groups served are the key to achieving the goal.
- Victims will disclose their experiences if the language barriers as well as the fear and trust barriers are overcome; and if the right questions are asked.
- The need for basic legal services and representation is a most crucial demand, acknowledged by both social service providers and law enforcement officers, for victims of domestic violence.

When rescued or escaping from the abuser, victims are most concerned with their immigration status and legal situation.

- More shelter space is needed in Dallas County that can offer safe and secure housing for victims of domestic violence; Currently, there are no shelters for male victims in Dallas County – Domestic violence agencies serve male victims by providing hotel vouchers.
- Agencies such as domestic violence shelters and homeless shelters need more funds/resources, including language access/interpreters, housing, safety, and health services to adequately address domestic violence in refugee and immigrant communities in the Dallas area. These victims often have nobody to help or support them in any way, which increases their dependence on service agencies.
- Interagency service coordination and clearer guidelines between social providers and law enforcement are critical to effectively serving victims.

LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERVENTION

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

Dallas County law enforcement agencies lack resources and qualified personnel to thoroughly investigate family violence cases. Due to very complex victim and offender dynamics, family violence cases require an extraordinary amount of time and a high degree of personnel specialization. There is a continuing need for police departments to provide services that are culturally and linguistically specific. Law enforcement officials need to be aware of the special issues present with immigrant and non-English speaking victims of family violence.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

The complex nature of family violence also increases the amount of time spent responding to a call, as it requires patrol officers to generate more comprehensive information in the form of determining the predominant aggressor, statements of the parties and evidence collection at the scene. None of the law enforcement agencies in Dallas County currently have a dedicated family violence first response team responding to the scene of a family violence call. It further results in ineffectively prepared cases for prosecution and a greater amount of time between offense and case filing. This in turn compromises victim safety and offender accountability.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

Dallas County law enforcement agencies need additional resources and qualified personnel to effectively investigate family violence offenses on the scene and at follow-up. In addition to personnel responding to family violence victims there is also a need for comprehensive training of law enforcement officers. Additional needs would include Spanish speaking officers, specialized first responders, qualified and trained investigators, family violence training coordinators, officers to monitor and enforce protective orders, 911 tape coordinators, as well as adequate equipment such as cameras, and devices for the duplication of 911 tapes.

Impact for Dallas County

Additional resources and qualified personnel will increase the effectiveness of the investigation of family violence offenses. This further increases the protection of the victim, the likelihood that victims access the criminal justice system, and ensures that the batterer is held accountable more effectively and swiftly.

SUPPORTING DATA

Family Violence Incidents¹

Family Violence	2006	2007	2008	2009
Reported Incidents Dallas County	22,488	21,294	21,725	19,859
FV Cases Filed w/ District Attorney	6,805	6,303	6,607	5,947

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

The number of family violence incidents reported to the law enforcement agencies in Dallas County has remained high. With legislative changes in 2009 regarding Strangulation and Continuing Course of Family Violence, some of the offenses that would have been misdemeanor offenses are now prosecuted on the felony level. This increases the amount of time spent on investigating and documenting these offenses at the law enforcement level. Also, many municipalities have faced budget cuts affecting law enforcement personnel or pay for overtime, reducing the amount of time and resources these agencies have to properly investigate and respond to family violence offenses.

- For those police departments who have a dedicated family violence unit:
 - At Irving Police Department, the number of family violence reports has increased by about 18% from the first 9 months of 2009 (1,427 FV reports) to the same period in 2010 (1,689 reports). There are three investigators assigned to the Domestic Violence Unit at Irving Police Department. ²
 - At Dallas Police Department, the number of family violence reports has increased from 9,618 for the first 9 months of 2009 to 10,073 for the same period in 2010 (4.7% increase). In about the middle of 2010, the Family Violence Unit at the Dallas Police Department was also assigned the investigation of all reports between dating partners that was previously handled by Crimes Against Persons without having received any increase in investigators assigned to the unit. ³

Family violence training for officers and specialized personnel is also affected by a reduction of resources. While there are quality training events offered in the region specific to the law enforcement response to family violence – e.g., by the Regional Training Program of the District Attorney’s Office, or the Sexual Assault and Family Violence Investigator Course – law enforcement agencies lack the resources to send officers to specialized training like this. As law enforcement agencies incorporate family violence training more heavily into their in-service training at their respective training academies, there is a greater need to ensure expertise and quality information provided by in-service trainers.

Many law enforcement agencies lag behind in technology resources and training needed to keep up with family violence offenders who have made use of technology as tools to stalk, harass and threatened their victims. Investigating cases in which technology is used to commit crimes, requires further specialized knowledge and expensive equipment.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

- Of 32 police agencies in Dallas County only two have Family Violence Units made up of specialized investigators and victim assistance personnel.⁴
- There is one training coordinator specializing in the organization and development of family violence training for law enforcement in Dallas County.⁵

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

Staff needs

- First response teams that include: Victim advocates and specialized officers
- Specialized family violence detectives
- Specialized victim advocates/counselors
- Protective Order enforcement officers

Training needs

- Resources for comprehensive in-service training
- Funds for advanced training in specific laws and offense investigation/documentation, as well as on identifying the predominant aggressor and officer-involved family violence
- Funds for coordinating and providing ongoing and comprehensive training for specialized personnel

Equipment needs

- Funds for equipment and technology for offense investigation and evidence collection
- Digital photography equipment
- 911 database systems
- Internet access
- Recording devices

REFERENCES

1. Texas Department of Public Safety, Uniform Crime Report of Texas 2006 – 2009
2. Irving Police Department, Domestic Violence Unit, October 2010
3. Dallas Police Department, Family Violence Unit – Crime Analyst, 2010
- 4./5. Dallas County District Attorney’s Office, Family Violence Division, 2010

PROSECUTION AND COURTS

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

There are not enough specialized family violence prosecutors and investigators to meet the demand Dallas County faces. Dallas County is a large urban county and the criminal courts have experienced consistently large numbers of family violence cases, many of which stay pending in the county and district courts for a year or longer due to a backlogged system and lack of resources. The caseload of family violence prosecutors and investigators at the District Attorney's Office has remained equally high over the past several years, with a recent increase in filings of Strangulation as a felony offense due to new legislation. With a large caseload, the amount of time prosecutors and investigators can devote to each case is limited. An overwhelming caseload also increases job stress and job burnout. A high ratio of prosecutors and investigators to pending cases may compromise offender accountability and victim safety.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

Effective prosecution of family violence offenders requires comprehensive and lengthy trial preparation. Prosecutors and investigators spend at least 30 hours preparing a case for trial. Family violence prosecution also requires prosecutors to have specialized knowledge and understanding of family violence dynamics and laws. A heavy caseload decreases the amount of time prosecutors and investigators can devote to a case. This impacts the prosecutor's ability to evaluate each case, do research and further investigation as well as to monitor the defendant's behavior on bond. Further, the longer a family violence case is pending in the courts, the lesser the likelihood that the victim will continue to be cooperative with the prosecution process.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

Dallas County requires additional prosecutors and investigators who are trained and devoted to prosecuting family violence cases. Further, court personnel such as additional bailiffs or specialized probation officers are also needed to ensure safety in the courtroom as well as perpetrator compliance.

Impact on Dallas County

An increase in the number of specialized prosecutors and investigators will allow more time for case preparation and enhance effective prosecution. It will also allow for more intensive monitoring of the defendant during the pendency of the case that enables prosecutors to put safety mechanisms in place while the case is still pending. Smaller caseloads will lead to quicker case disposition, greater offender accountability as well as justice for the victim.

SUPPORTING DATA

Dallas County District Attorney’s Office Caseload

	2006	2007	2008	2009
New Felony Family Violence Cases	1,612	1,549	1,771	1,776
New Misdemeanor Family Violence Cases	5,193	4,754	4,836	4,171
Average Pending Felony FV Cases	1,291	1,355	1,436	1,371
Average Pending Misdemeanor FV Cases	7,281	7,276	7,086	7,077
Number of Protective Orders Filed*	851	1,003	894	523
Number of Protective Orders Granted	573	662	554	377
Total Number of Victims Served by Protective Order Unit	14,649	10,617	9,358	8,615

Source: Dallas County District Attorney’s Office, Family Violence Division

* The fluctuating number of Protective Orders filed is in part due to the increasing complexity of the Protective Order application process, and a decrease in staff resources.

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

As the criminal justice system response has become more streamlined and sophisticated since the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, the number of offense and cases referred to prosecution continues to be high. County funding for specialized investigators and prosecutors has been lacking at the same time, and the availability of resources to use best practices approaches in the prosecution of these very complex cases is limited. With each passage of new, needed legislation to improve the criminal justice response to family violence there is also a period of adjustment within the system to an increased caseload that does not have funding for extra personnel attached. For example, two important new laws that make 1) Strangulation and 2) Continuous Family Violence (two offenses within 12 months) felony offenses, have resulted in an increased caseload for felony prosecutors and investigators who are already carrying overwhelming caseloads. In the felony family violence section at the Dallas County District Attorney’s Office, the average pending caseload is over 225 cases per

prosecutor (10/2010). The prosecutor's offices and courts lack funding to adequately evaluate and dispose of cases in an efficient and expedited manner.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Dallas County has two dedicated family violence misdemeanor courts (County Criminal Court #10) and County Criminal Court #11). Dedicated criminal courts work to ensure consistent, correct, and expedited disposition of family violence cases which improves the efficiency and effectiveness of prosecution and educates those participating in the system. Dallas County is home to the only dedicated Protective Order Court in the State of Texas that hears all protective order applications filed by the Protective Order Unit of the Dallas County District Attorney's Office.

The Dallas County District Attorney's Office Family Violence Division is the largest specialized division in the office with dedicated prosecutors, investigators and victim advocates. Only approximately 50% of the key staff in the division is County funded staff. The family violence misdemeanor caseloads are handled by three (3) prosecutors assigned to County Criminal Court #10, three (3) prosecutors assigned to County Criminal Court #11, and one (1) Investigator shared between both courts.

The Felony Unit of the Family Violence Division employs six (6) felony family violence prosecutors and five (5) felony family violence investigators. The recently established Sexual Assault Prosecution Team that is part of the Family Violence Division handles sexual assault cases with victims over the age of 17 regardless of their prior relationship to the offender. This team consists of one (1) sexual assault prosecutor and one (1) sexual assault investigator.

In addition, the District Attorney's Office has two (2) prosecutors and one (1) investigator dedicated to the processing of new family violence cases at the Intake/Grand Jury level.

The City of Dallas has a dedicated Domestic Violence Unit with (1) one specialized prosecutor handling the Class C Assault FV offenses. The cases are handled during a specially set family violence docket before a City Judge one day per week.

Court Partnership is an organization of volunteers that observe the Dallas County criminal courts with the goal to create awareness within the community and justice system of weaknesses and strengths in the handling and decisions made in domestic violence cases. Court Partnership currently focus on the dedicated misdemeanor family violence courts, Protective Order Court and family violence cases in the 17 felony courts. Court Partnership

objectively monitors the judicial process, records the information for analysis, and formulates recommendations for improvement to be implemented either by the court or at the community level.

CURRENT NEEDS

Staff and Training

- Dallas County requires additional prosecutors and investigators who are trained and devoted to prosecuting family violence cases. An increase in the number of specialized prosecutors and investigators will allow more time for case preparation and enhance effective prosecution. This will lead to quicker case disposition and offender accountability as well as justice from the victim. It is necessary to invest the resources to hire and retain the best and brightest prosecutors.
- The dedicated Dallas County family violence courts require funds to provide for optimal staffing levels such as bailiffs to provide security, in order to ensure safety in the courtroom.
- Dallas County requires specialized and seasoned officers to monitor defendants on probation and ensure compliance with conditions of probation.
- Dallas County needs more qualified and dedicated judicial personnel to oversee these highly complex and lethal cases.

Program needs

- Resources and funds for the coordination, administration, training, and oversight of the many volunteers of the Court Partnership project.
- Additional funds are required to fund training, equipment, supplies, and operating expenses as well as professional/contractual services in the prosecution process.
- Funding is required for qualified interpreters in the courtroom as well as in all stages of the investigation and prosecution process.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

There are an overwhelming number of domestic violence victims in Dallas County that do not have access to affordable legal services due to a lack of low cost civil attorneys. There is also a lack of civil legal services that are linguistically and culturally specific to the growing immigrant and non-English speaking victims of family violence. Many of these victims need assistance with protective orders, final divorce decrees, and/or representation in custody issues as well as emergency civil legal representation, in order to safely leave their abuser and gain legal protection for themselves and their children.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

Without effective civil legal representation, victims of domestic violence continue to be without legal protection from the abuser and are often unable to safely cut their ties with the abuser. Frequently, perpetrators of domestic violence use the legal system to further manipulate the victim and control their resources. Lack of access to civil legal assistance increases the likelihood that victims suffer continued emotional and physical violence from their abuser.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

Dallas County needs additional resources and personnel who provide free and low cost legal assistance to victims of domestic violence. The need includes protective order attorneys, civil attorneys with non-profit agencies who provide free and low cost civil legal assistance, advocates, and support staff. This further includes bilingual personnel who can provide the above services.

Impact for Dallas County

Providing victims with affordable legal assistance as recommended will improve victims' ability to safely and permanently leave their abusive partners.

SUPPORTING DATA

The Legal Aid Of North West Texas Family Law Division serving Dallas County assisted the following number of clients:

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Litigation Assistance	993	1,110	1,316	1,186
Advice and Brief Service	5,738	5,349	4,745	4,166

Data provided by Legal Aid of North West Texas, October 2010

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

Dallas County continues to face a major gap in free/low-cost/affordable civil legal representation for victims of family violence. Legal Aid of North West Texas’ Family Law Division in Dallas County handles exclusively cases that involve domestic violence. At the City Square LAW Office, the average caseload is 150-175 cases carried by the LAW Center attorneys and staff at any given time. Over 33% of the cases involve domestic violence (www.citysq.org/law @ 2010). The number of victims in need for affordable, high-quality civil legal assistance is much greater than its availability. The majority of victims do not meet the income guidelines of the local legal services agencies but do not have an income high enough to pay for high-quality expert civil legal representation against an abusive partner who most often has greater financial resources for long-term litigation.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Currently, there are two organizations providing full civil legal representation to victims of family violence at no charge or low cost in Dallas County.

Legal Aid of North West Texas, Inc. – Family Law Division’s mission is preserving, protecting, supporting, and stabilizing the lives and rights of families, particularly what remains of families ripped apart by violence and tragedies. The Family Law Division provides mainly assistance with Protective orders where there has been physical abuse and divorce involving imminent threat of family violence or family violence (www.lanwt.org @2010). Legal Aid assist victims whose income is at or below federal poverty guidelines. Legal Aid Of North West Texas runs clinics throughout Dallas County providing legal advice and assistance with pro-se representation in certain matters.

CitySquare’s Legal Action Works (LAW) Center provides comprehensive legal services to low-income families who could not otherwise afford legal representation to handle family crises. Approximately 80% of the cases are family law; of this, over 33% involve domestic violence, which greatly endangers the victim as well as the children in these households. LAW charges fees on a sliding scale basis for those who do not make enough to pay for traditional legal

services, but who make a little more than is allowed under federal funding standards. Of the average caseload of 150-175 cases carried by the LAW Center attorneys and staff at any given time, some 75% are brought to resolution within one year of opening the case file. (www.citysq.org/law @ 2010)

The Dallas County District Attorney's Office provides free Protective Order assistance to victims of family violence on a first come, first serve basis. Protective Orders are filed and litigated in Dallas County's dedicated Protective Order Court in the Frank Crowley Criminal Courts Building. The Protective Order Unit currently staffs three (3) Protective Order Prosecutors and (4) Full-Time Advocates assisting victims with obtaining Protective Orders.

The Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program is an organization dedicated to increasing and enhancing pro bono legal services to the poor in Dallas through the recruitment, training, and support of volunteer attorneys. (www.dallasbar.org/dvap @2010) The Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program matches pro-bono attorneys with people in need for legal advice and representation. Most of these pro-bono attorneys however lack specialization in family court matters involving family violence.

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

- Free or low cost and qualified civil legal attorneys with specialization in family violence issues to provide quality representation in the family courts regardless of the victim's income
- Family violence advocates and paralegals specialized in civil legal matters
- Resources and staff for court accompaniment
- Bilingual personnel to provide advocacy and civil legal representation
- Funds for filing fees, social studies, court records, civil service, and for parking
- Resources for Expert Witness in the use of family court cases

PERPETRATOR COMPLIANCE AND PARTNER ADVOCACY

PROBLEM

What is the problem in Dallas County?

A significant number of family violence offenders referred by Dallas County CSCD and Dallas County Courts fail to enroll into an offender treatment program as a condition of probation or court order thus placing victims at greater risk of further violence. It is paramount, that steps must be taken by Dallas County CSCD, the Dallas County Court system, and Battering Intervention and Prevention (BIP) providers to develop and implement Coordinated Community Response that holds batterers accountable and places victim safety as its primary goal.

Battering Intervention and Prevention Programs (BIPPs) are widely accepted as the treatment model of choice for perpetrators of family violence offences involving domestic violence. BIPP is an essential component of batterer accountability and potential rehabilitation. The effectiveness of the BIP program is dependent on the consistency with which the criminal justice system holds offenders and respondents accountable for their actions.

Recently, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Community Justice Assistance Division (TDCJ-CJAD) has implemented a state-wide accreditation process to ensure the quality of the providers in the community providing BIPP services. One of the accreditation standards require that all BIP programs notify victims when a batterer enters/exits a BIPP program. It is imperative that victims receive information related to services delivered to the perpetrator of the crime. These contacts are essential for victims to be recognized and given the opportunity to receive information, education, and referrals for local victim-related resources. Due to the lack of resources in BIPP programs, there is an inconsistent level of victim/partner contact within the county.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

The cost of future episodes of abuse by batterers must cause a financial burden on the criminal justice system (i.e., costs associated with future court appearances, district attorneys, victim advocates, and follow-up through probation department). BIPP programs in Dallas County serve as an important monitoring tool for batterer accountability. However, the effectiveness of treatment is dependent on the consistency with which the entire criminal justice system holds offenders accountable for their actions and assists in holding offenders accountable when they fail to enroll or complete treatment through an accredited program.

SUPPORTING DATA

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of FV reports in Dallas County *	22,488	21,294	21,725	19,859
Number of felony FV dispositions	1,509	1,698	1,565	1,442
Number of felony FV convictions**	1,348	1,543	1,337	1,212
Number of misdemeanor FV dispositions	4,048	3,824	4,630	4,314
Number of misdemeanor FV convictions**	2,098	2,721	2,487	2,154
Number of Protective Orders granted	573	662	554	377
Number of PO Respondents ordered to BIPP	481	588	465	317

* This data was obtained from the Texas Department of Public Safety’s Annual Crime in Texas Reports

** Reliable data on the number of convicted offenders ordered to BIPP was not available

Source: Data provided by the Dallas District Attorney’s Office, Family Violence Division

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

The above data indicates that there continues to be a significant number of family violence related reports occurring in Dallas County on an annual basis, as well as a large number of family violence related dispositions/convictions. Unfortunately, no reliable data was available related to the number of convicted offenders who have been court ordered to BIPP. Anecdotally, the high number of court ordered family violence offenders who neither enroll and/or complete a BIP program continues to place victims at greater risk for future episodes of abuse.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

There are currently ten (10) BIP programs providing services to Dallas County with either probationary accredited (PA) or accredited (A) status through the Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Community Justice Assistance Division:

Program Name	Telephone	Accreditation Status	Approval Date
Children First, Inc.	972-264-0604	PA	11-Dec-09
Hope for Tomorrow	214-353-0773	PA	11-Dec-09
Lankford Counseling Agency (Lankford LUUP)	972-227-4000	PA	2-Mar-10
New Beginning Center	972-276-0151	A	16-Nov-09
PRM BIPP	214-321-9100	PA	22-Apr-10
The Family Place	214-559-2170	A	16-Nov-09
The Mind Spa	972-780-5160	PA	21-Jan-10

Genesis Counseling Associates	214-305-2223	PA	1-Jun-10
Addicare	214-529-5644	PA	3-Aug-10
New Visions Social Services	214-421-5252	PA	6-Aug-10

Source: http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/cjad/bipp_accreditation_status.pdf @ October 16, 2010

Dallas County CSCD / Probation officers are responsible for monitoring compliance for offenders on probation. Offenders on Conditional Dismissal are required to return to the designated court to present a notice of completion.

However, offenders on protective orders do not have an entity that monitors compliance unless they go before the court for a violation of protective order.

Accreditation guidelines require that referring entities must be notified within five (5) business days from an offenders entrance, withdrawal, dismissal, and/or completion from a BIP program.

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

- Qualified staff to facilitate accredited BIPP groups in accessible locations
- Increase resources to assist the large number of indigent offenders ordered to obtain accredited BIPP services
- Specialized BIPP resources for GLBT population
- Qualified staff to facilitate multi-language services for BIPP groups
- Partner advocate to provide for safety at BIPP locations
- Appropriate women's services for court ordered BIPP female offenders that have special needs and /or specific safety needs
- Probation officers that have received specialized training in domestic violence and exclusively handle domestic violence cases.

SUPERVISED VISITATION

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

Dallas County lacks adequate low-cost supervised visitation (SV) and monitored exchange (ME) services that incorporate an understanding of domestic violence and meets the safety needs of adult victims and their children. SV and ME services provides families dealing with issues of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and child abuse a place to have safe, supportive access as a result of separation, divorce, and custody agreements/orders. Without access to these vital services both adult victims and their children face risks for their continued safety. Without adequate and accessible services in the community the court system is left to make possibly unsafe recommendations regarding access that are potentially poorly supervised and unsafe.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

Texas law^[1] requires judges to presume that ordering SV in cases where there is evidence of family violence or child abuse is in the best interest of the child. To prevent further risk to these children, an overwhelming number of parents are ordered to utilize SV or ME services, but there are four critical shortfalls in Dallas County: 1) lack of availability of specialized centers that operate to meet the unique needs of domestic violence adult and child victims; 2) lack of services that are low-cost and/or free for the largely low-income, underserved populations that are referred to these services; 3) lack of multiple locations that provide availability to the large geographic area of Dallas County; and 4) limited county and state financial support for these services.

The above referenced law, combined with the overwhelming number of family violence incidents in Dallas County, has significantly increased the number of referrals made to SV and ME centers by the courts. A lack of these services in Dallas County leaves battered women unsafe and their children at risk.

What needs to be done to alleviate the problem?

In order to facilitate safe SV and ME that incorporates the needs of adult victims and their children, in addition to providing the volume of services needed for families in Dallas County, adequate funding is needed. The capacity of the current SV and ME centers in Dallas County should be increased to insure access for families dealing with issues of domestic

violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence and to assure those services can meet language and socio-economic barriers families may be facing.

Impact for Dallas County

Studies have shown that the risk of violence is often greater for victims of domestic violence and their children after separation from an abusive situation, and batterers commonly try to use SV or ME programs to continue their battering tactics toward their partners and/or children^[4]. Historically, however, SV and ME programs have not been specifically designed to address the safety needs of families with histories of domestic violence. Adequate and accessible services will increase safety for children and parents in Dallas County and can help many victims of domestic violence feel safe and provide an opportunity for children to spend time with a visiting parent that is safe and supportive.

SUPPORTING DATA

- 11,824 Divorce cases in Dallas County in 2009
- 9,814 Custody/support cases apart from divorce in Dallas County in 2009
- On average, 68% of divorce cases have at least one child in the home
- On average, 66% of divorce cases have multiple children in the home

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

Divorce continues to affect many in our community. In 2009 there were 11,824 divorces cases filed in Dallas County according to the District Clerk's office. Unfortunately, at the time of divorce filing it is unclear how many children may be in the home and/or if domestic violence is a possible issue. In addition to divorce filings there were also 9,814 custody/support cases filed. In general, average estimates based on a 2003 random sampling of Dallas divorce filings indicates that 68% of divorce cases have at least one child in the home and 66% of cases have multiple children. ^[3] Trends in divorce data nationwide indicate a similar finding. Unfortunately cases where domestic violence is a presenting issue in a divorce or custody filing is not captured by any mechanism other than what may be presented in a wide array of court filings, testimony in court, assessments by the court, and judge's rulings. Despite this the family court judges in Dallas County indicated in a survey in 2003 that around 728 to 1,092 of divorce/custody cases per year would benefit from supervision while either exchanging children or while one parent visits children. In January 2010, the Presiding District Family Court Judge estimated that around 780 cases a year are referred to some sort of SV/ME due to family

violence. If more SV/ME programs were available and had increased capacity to meet the needs of domestic violence victims the Presiding Family Court Judge estimates referrals would be in the range of 1,500 to 1,700 cases per year.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

SV and ME services are currently provided in different ways with different focuses. The child welfare system depends on child protective services to provide supervised visitation services in cases where child abuse has been reported and a decision has been made to remove the child from one or both parents. In that setting the focus is to prevent child abuse while allowing a parent to see a child during the time period that the court or child welfare system is making a decision on the placement needs of that child.

Private practitioners also are utilized in different capacities for the purpose of SV and ME services. The focus and training of these practitioners can be varied. This practitioner may be a licensed professional in a counseling or social work field, as well as just a person who has no professional license in any field but has been appointed by a court to facilitate access.

Family members are often put in the role of providing and/or facilitating SV and ME services. Where SV centers are not available, or for indigent clients without funds to pay for a supervisor, many courts or custodial parents opt for a family member's assistance. Family members may be unsafe options in cases involving domestic violence.

Law enforcement is often an unintended provider of SV and ME services. Far too often parents seeking safety attempt to facilitate exchanges in the parking lots of police stations in Dallas County. Police are often unaware that these activities are even going on their parking lots and if they are – they are under no obligation to monitor those exchanges. Families may also attempt to use public businesses in the hopes that a public location for an exchange may prevent violence.

Dallas County currently has two established SV and ME centers, Faith and Liberty's Place (FLP) and Hannah's House. Both facilitate SV and ME services for families in Dallas County, however continue to have limited availability and capacity to meet the demand for services. FLP is however the only center in Dallas County with a clear focus on meeting the specialized needs of adult victims and their children.

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

There are significant gaps and needs to assure that there are not only enough services but also resources available that assure that those who provide services adequately account for the individualized needs of those families impacted by domestic violence.

Safety needs: Consistency and professionalism in the provision of services is key in assuring that SV and ME services account for battering. The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) has issued a document called: *Guiding Principles for Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Programs*. Although FLP is the only OVW program in Dallas County that incorporates all guiding principles, these national guidelines are the widely accepted framework for assuring that SV and ME service providers account for domestic violence in a safe, consistent and professional manner.

Staff needs: Additional qualified, well-trained staff are needed to increase capacity in specialized centers that operate to meet the unique needs of domestic violence adult and child victims. Staff who are bilingual/bicultural and represent the community served are an additional need.

Equipment needs: A specialized SV and ME center needs unique equipment to ensure physical safety and to provide a child-friendly environment. Safety equipment may include camera systems, metal detector(s), secured access entrances, panic buttons, etc.

Program needs: As detailed above, a specialized SV and ME center focused on the needs of victims of family violence and their children must incorporate guidelines, procedures and practices that adhere to the principles defined by the Office of Violence Against Women and/or other nationally recognized best practices.

Space needs: In order to significantly increase the capacity of specialized SV and ME centers in Dallas County, additional space is needed in the existing centers and/or more locations are needed to provide greater access.

Other needs: Since its inception, the primary funding for FLP (the only center in Dallas County specializing in the unique needs of adult victims and their children) has been federal funding from the Office of Violence Against Women, along with some additional funding from Dallas County and community donations obtained through The Family Place. To ensure that adequate low-cost SV and ME services are available to adult victims of family violence and their children, more funds are needed from Dallas County taxpayers and grants. Above all, adequate safety for the adult victims of domestic violence and their children is the primary need, but

financial resources must be invested to ensure SV and ME are available to protect adult and child victims of family violence.

REFERENCES

- [1] Texas Family Code 153.004. Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 586, § 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001
- [2] Dallas County District Clerk's Office, 2009
- [3] Estimate provided by Presiding Family Court Judge, January 2010
- [4] Jaffe, P.G., "Children of Domestic Violence: Special Challenges in Custody and Visitation Dispute Resolution." In J. Carter, C. Heisler, & M. Runner (Eds.), *Domestic Violence and Children: Resolving Custody and Visitation Disputes, A National Judicial Curriculum* (San Francisco: Family Violence Prevention Fund), pp. 22-30.

YOUTH INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

There is a lack of comprehensive public education regarding domestic, family, and dating violence in the school system in Dallas County. Due to this lack of education, domestic and family violence continue to grow among the youth in the county and the belief regarding violence as an acceptable form of conflict resolution persists. Additionally, there are significant challenges related to accessing youth within the school system to encourage behavior change and often the services that are currently being provided encourage awareness through one time dosage. When teen victims are identified, there are few resources that are easily accessible within their home school environment and there is some ambiguity regarding who, specifically Child Protective Services or Police Departments, will address the needs of minor teen dating violence victims who may have supportive parents. Services are also varied and insufficient to serve child victims of family violence in domestic violence shelters and outreach programs.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

Youth violence has serious ramifications that carry into adulthood. It is imperative that communities address relational violence promptly to prevent future problems, for both the victims and offenders. Victims experience a risk of severe injury or death, increased high risk behaviors, and declining academic performance. Studies also show that boys who were identified as bullies in middle school were four times as likely as their peers to have more than one criminal conviction by age 24 (Banks, 1997).

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

Domestic, Family, and Teen Dating Violence is a public health issue affecting all individuals within the community and therefore requires a community wide response. Quality intervention and counseling services are needed for children and youth who have experienced violence, in the shelters, outreach programs, and in the schools. Additionally, a primary prevention approach of educating children and adolescents about forming healthy relationships should be a public health priority. Many of these negative patterns begin in elementary school, and the long-term solution will involve education that teaches positive relationship skills and respect for others. Students, parents and school administration/staff have to be partners in ensuring school safety.

Educational programming should utilize best practices that have been identified through statewide educational programs and an age-appropriate curriculum should be developed and school and shelters should begin to work together. Cross training of staff, educators, and advocates will enhance this partnership to develop a strong, multidisciplinary team. Teen volunteers could be instructed to deliver peer-to-peer information and co-facilitate teen support groups.

Impact on Dallas County

At this time there are some agencies that provide comprehensive programming to the youth of Dallas County; however, resources are limited and more comprehensive programming would create a reduction in the number of incidents of domestic, family, and teen dating violence among youth and a reduction over time in the numbers of incidents of domestic and family violence and interfamilial abuse among adults. These programs would also create a greater understanding of how to develop relationships of equality and respect and the actual level of occurrence of teen dating violence as a result of better identification of types of assault crimes committed by adolescents.

SUPPORTING DATA

In a recent report by the Family Violence Prevention Fund, one in four students in grades 8 and 9 reported being victims of dating violence, one in five college-aged women are assaulted before they graduate, and one in three college students have experienced abuse in a dating relationship. The Department of Justice consistently finds that girls between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence. According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund, A survey conducted in 2009 by Teenage Research Unlimited found that one in five tweens, children ages 11 to 14, say their friends are victims of dating violence and nearly half who are in relationships know friends who are verbally abused.

The 2008-2009 United Way Community Needs Assessment Helping Children and Youth Achieve Their Potential section concluded that the Family Safety situation is worsening in Dallas County. The Crimes Against Children key indicator is worsening with the number of confirmed victims of child abuse or neglect increasing consistently across the region over the past five years by 18%. Also the assessment concluded that the rate of at-risk students continues to increase in Dallas County. Mesquite ISD has shown the greatest change from 2002 to 2006, an increase of 40.2%.

Approximately 30% of all students in grades 6 through 10 have been bullied or have bullied other children (US Department of Health & Human Services, 2004). In Texas, 50% of students have experienced dating violence as either a victim or abuser. Two out of five teens experienced verbal abuse; one out of four reported physical violence; and one out of five reported sexual violence (Texas Council on Family Violence, 2002). Additionally, four out of five students reported experiencing sexual harassment at some point during their school careers (Texas Association Against Sexual Assault).

With the passage of House Bill 121 in the 80th Texas Legislature, Educational Code 37.0831 requires school districts to adopt teen dating violence policies that address the following:

- include a definition of dating violence
- address safety planning
- include enforcement of protective orders
- include school-based alternatives to protective orders
- address training for teachers and administrators
- address counseling for affected students
- include awareness education for students and parents.

Respected educational programming entities such Texas Association Against Sexual Assault and the Office of the Attorney General have adopted the following best practice standards for educators in providing primary prevention education and include the following:

- Comprehensive - strategies should include multiple components and affect multiple settings to address a wide range of risk and protective factors.
- Include varied teaching methods - strategies should include multiple teaching methods, including some type of active, skills-based component.
- Provide sufficient dosage - participants need to be exposed to enough of the activity for it to have an effect. Research shows that 7-9 doses are needed to affect changes in attitudes and behaviors.
- Are theory driven - preventive strategies should have a scientific justification or logical rationale.
- Provide opportunities for positive relationships - programs should foster strong, stable, positive relationships between children/youth and adults, youth and youth, adults and adults.

- Are appropriately timed - program activities should happen at a time (developmentally) that can have maximal impact in a participant's life.
- Are socio-culturally relevant - programs should be tailored to fit within cultural beliefs and practices of specific groups as well as local community norms.
- Include outcome evaluations - a systematic outcome evaluation is necessary to determine whether a program or strategy worked.
- Involves well-trained staff - programs need to be implemented by staff members who are sensitive, competent, and have received sufficient training, support, and supervision.

Source: *What Works in Prevention, Principles of Effective Prevention Programs*, June/July 2003, American Psychologist

Number of Youth in Dallas County by School District

DISTRICT	Oct 2009
Dallas ISD	157,111
Garland ISD	57,861
Richardson ISD	34,843
Mesquite ISD	37,272
Irving ISD	33,679
Carrollton/Farmers Branch ISD	25,920
Grand Prairie ISD	26,395
Duncanville ISD	12,903
Coppell ISD	9,982
Desoto ISD	9,9069
Cedar Hill ISD	8,284
Highland Park ISD	6,448
Lancaster ISD	6,176
Wilmer/Hutchins ISD	N/A
Sunnyvale ISD	1,010
TOTAL	516,953

Source: Information obtained from TEA Website, 2010

Number of Children residing in Dallas County domestic violence emergency shelters

(Source: Communication with each agency)

	2005	2006	2007	2008
New Beginning Center	250	233	216	254
Brighter Tomorrows	714	716	621	552
The Family Place	654	502	428	432
Genesis Women's Shelter	203	240	241	282
Total	1821	1691	1506	1520

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

Exposure to family violence and dating violence can contribute to risky behaviors and long-lasting mental health concerns. Research from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency indicates that girls who experience dating violence are more likely to be exposed to other forms of violence, show a greater propensity for unsafe sexual activity, and a higher incidence of substance abuse and suicide than either boys or non-abused girls. Teen victims are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in unhealthy diet behaviors, become pregnant and contract sexually transmitted diseases (Silverman, 2001). Victims report increased levels of depression, anxiety and health problems that may limit daily functioning (World Health Organization, 2002).

Exposure to violence is an unfortunate reality in schools, and too often educators are unprepared to recognize, prevent and address it (McPeters, 2007). Although Educational Code 37.0831 successfully brings the issues of domestic, family, and dating violence into the school environment, lack of funding makes it difficult for districts to implement requirements. Additionally, while there is some primary prevention and risk reduction services that have been implemented within school districts, services are not comprehensive and often rely on a one time assembly or presentation to address issues related to domestic, family, and dating violence.

Two recent deaths of Texas adolescents highlight the need for youth education and violence prevention services in Dallas County schools:

Corrine Wilson, age 13, was bullied until she took her own life. Corinne’s mother, Rochelle Sides, describes that Corrine would often come home from school crying and saying “No one likes me, I hate it here.” On October 6, 2004, a classmate slapped Corrine during P.E. and called her a whore. Students wrote her notes, telling her she was fat, ugly, and that she should just go home and kill herself. She committed suicide later that day.

Ortralla Mosley, age 15, was killed at school by her 16-year-old boyfriend, Marcus McTear. Ortralla's mother said Marcus made a good impression, but he soon began to control her daughter's life. Ortralla broke up with Marcus because of her fear of his controlling behavior, but the next day he stabbed her to death in the hallway of their high school.

Violent deaths such as these are not common, but bullying, family violence, teen dating violence, and sexual violence are. Therefore, comprehensive educational programs must provide counseling and education for these populations addressing physical safety, mental health and risky behaviors, preventing teen victimization, and restoring functionality so that children and teens can successfully access education.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The following organizations and entities provide a variety of education to youth in schools and in the community relating to domestic violence, teen dating violence, or youth victimization:

Brighter Tomorrows

Child Abuse Prevention Center

Communities In Schools

Genesis Women's Shelter

Grant Halliburton Foundation – I Am Here Coalition

Lift Every Voice

New Beginning Center

Region 10 - School Support Staff: Administration/Faculty, Social Workers, Psychologists, Counselors, Nurses, SRO's.

Teen Contact

The Family Place

Women Called Moses

The following domestic violence agencies provide services to victims who witness abuse:

Genesis Outreach

The Family Place

Brighter Tomorrows

New Beginning Center

Mosaic Family Services

VIP/Rape Crisis

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

- Insufficient number of qualified trained professionals providing educational services.
- Minimal counseling and intervention services are available for children and youth who have experienced violence. Additional staff and programs are needed to serve victims of dating violence, child victims of family violence, and juvenile offenders.
- Minimal access to youth within the school system to provide adequate dosage that will encourage behavior change rather than focus on awareness education.
- Youth who make outcries experience problems related to transportation as well as a lack of desire, motivation, or ability (due to safety risks) to follow through with services outside of their home school environment. Services are not easily accessible to youth.
- There is some ambiguity regarding who, specifically Child Protective Services or Police Departments, will address the needs of minor teen dating violence victims who may have supportive parents.
- Minimal services are available to special youth populations – LGBT, Deaf and hard of hearing, Refugee populations, ESL Classes, Juveniles. Often these youth do not receive services at all. There is an insufficient number of quality trained professionals providing educational services or responding to victims through outcries.
- Lack of community-wide awareness regarding the need for domestic and family violence education.

REFERENCES

1. Prevalence, Perceptions and Awareness of Domestic Violence in Texas, Saurage Research, Inc. for Texas Council on Family Violence, February 2003
2. (Banks, 1997).
3. (Texas Council on Family Violence, 2002).
4. (US Department of Health & Human Services, 2004).
5. (World Health Organization, 2002).
6. (McPeters, 2007).
7. *What Works in Prevention, Principles of Effective Prevention Programs*, June/July 2003, American Psychologist

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

There is a lack of professionals from a variety of disciplines that are adequately trained to appropriately respond to and/or intervene with domestic violence victims. The majority of domestic violence victims access a variety of services outside of domestic violence agencies and the criminal justice system, such as in health care, social services, education, and church settings. Many professionals working in these settings have not received specialized training to identify signs of abuse, to offer safe and appropriate interventions, or document effectively. This results in a lack of appropriate intervention and creates a barrier for the victim to reach out for help, to obtain important safety resources, or to leave the abusive partner. This in turn compromises the safety of victims and their children. At the same time, many victims seek assistance from the criminal justice system. Due to the evolution of the criminal justice response, there is an increasing need for cross training of criminal justice personnel and service providers, in order for service providers to provide effective and safe court accompaniment and services to victims.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

While the issue of domestic violence is addressed more frequently in the public discourse and some systems have implemented processes to identify and assist victims, in a large urban county such as Dallas, there is an enormous number of professionals that come into contact with victims on a daily basis who lack education about domestic violence, on how to appropriately intervene and how to help victims navigate the various resources. The lack of awareness and training among professionals creates a large gap in potentially identifying and appropriately assisting victims of domestic violence. Lack of training often results in ineffective screening for abuse, improper documentation of evidence or suspicions of abuse, and frequently leads well-meaning professionals to offer unsafe and ineffective recommendations to the victims.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

Dallas County requires resources to organize and provide up-to-date specialized training and education to professionals in order to increase the victim's access to safety information. This involves personnel specialized in family violence to network, coordinate, develop and

provide educational seminars to professionals in a variety of disciplines. In addition, with the increasingly complex criminal justice system response to domestic violence, victim services providers greatly benefit from concrete information about the criminal justice process in order to provide the best assistance to victims who access this system. Providing specialized family violence training that is tailored to the profession requires intensive logistical organization, time and resources, and funds for compensation, training materials and travel.

Impact for Dallas County

Additional personnel and resources to organize professional training will increase awareness of family violence issues among professionals who come in contact with victims. It will provide them with solid tools to identify signs of abuse and prevent family violence, to intervene in a respectful and effective manner, and to properly document statements and evidence that may help in the prosecution of the perpetrator and to protect the victim. Further, professional training will make effective use of an excellent opportunity for Dallas County to reach out to victims who may not access the criminal justice system or traditional domestic violence shelters for help.

SUPPORTING DATA

Professionals trained throughout the North Central Texas Region by the District Attorney’s Regional Training Program by major disciplines:

Discipline	2007	2008	2009
Attorneys/Law Students	42	96	76
Correction Personnel	218	261	235
Court Personnel	40	7	7
Education Staff*	n/a	n/a	21
Faith-Based Organization Staff	40	2	76
Government Agency Staff	45	6	392
Health Care Staff	146	5	15
Law Enforcement Officers	598	316	447
Mental Health Professionals	66	44	37
Social Services Organization Staff	105	98	25
Prosecutors	45	164	278
Victim Advocates	606	273	266

Data Source: Dallas County District Attorney’s Office, Family Violence Division

* Numbers on Education Staff not collected by program prior to 2009.

DISCUSSION OF DATA AND TRENDS

The *Texas Summary of the 2009 Domestic Violence Counts: A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services* identified that 4,221 individuals in communities throughout the State of Texas attended 143 training sessions provided by local domestic violence programs on September 15, 2009.

Traditionally, service providers have played a predominant role in training first responders on identifying and responding to victims of family violence. However, one of the trends on a statewide level is that due to limited resources, service providers are forced to focus their attention on direct client services leaving little time and staff resources for training criminal justice and allied professionals. At the same time, law enforcement and criminal justice agencies, as well as employers of allied professionals have also experienced a decrease in their budgets for training.

While agencies such as most law enforcement agencies have implemented their own in-service curriculum the quality, relevancy and frequency of the training is still lacking due to limited time and resources, and the expertise of the trainers covering the information. This is also the case in the increasing amount of web-based family violence trainings offered.

CURRENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The Dallas County Domestic Violence Awareness Coalition (DVAC) and the Dallas County Sexual Assault Coalition (DCSAC) both have Professional Training Committees that are active in coordinating a variety of training events for professionals in the community throughout the year. The type of presentations offered are based on the needs of victim services providers within the community or are targeted toward allied professionals that are in need of extensive information on working with victims of domestic violence.

The Dallas County District Attorney's Office runs a Regional Training Program that coordinates specialized family violence trainings in Dallas County and throughout the North Central Texas Region. The training curriculum is tailored to the needs of attending professionals and the community, drawing from seasoned speakers on domestic violence from the District Attorney's Office and the community.

All domestic violence agencies in Dallas County also provide professional training in the community.

CURRENT NEEDS IN DALLAS COUNTY

- Additional personnel specialized in organizing ongoing family violence training
- Resources for curriculum development, training logistics, high-tech equipment, training materials and travel
- Resources for expert personnel to provide quality, specialized family violence training for different professional groups
- Resources for the development of innovative, high quality web-based family violence training for a variety of professional audiences