

CAUSTRALIAN DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE CLEARINGHOUSE

NEWSLETTER



The Role of the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse

The publication of this *Newsletter* marks the beginning of the work of the Clearinghouse which has been established with funds provided by the Commonwealth Government under *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence*. By a combination of publications, databases and an information service, the Clearinghouse will assist specialist and health and community workers and other interested parties to respond strategically to domestic and family violence.

The two major publications of the Clearinghouse will be *Newsletters* and *Issues Papers* which will appear quarterly and be national in scope. The agreement between the Commonwealth Government and University of New South Wales to create the Clearinghouse is only weeks old so that the present *Newsletter* is mainly intended to announce our presence and to invite your contributions to future issues. Newsy, brief (less than 150 words) items, with a reference to a source of further information - a publication, an office, a telephone and/or fax. number, an e-mail address - will be especially welcome.

At this stage we intend to organise the *Newsletter* under the headings which follow, although we obviously would modify the envisaged format to accommodate information that would be of interest and assistance to workers in the field :

(continued page 2)

Partnerships Against Domestic Violence is a Commonwealth Government initiative, working with the States and Territories and with the community to find better ways of preventing and responding to domestic violence.

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The development of other services, such as databases and an information service, await the appointment of staff, including the Director of the Clearinghouse. The March, 2000, *Newsletter* will report progress on these forthcoming services and information about how you can take advantage of them. The Clearinghouse is committed to serving the information needs of those working in the field of domestic and family violence so we look forward to receiving your

advice on how we can best meet those needs. To ensure that the Clearinghouse has a truly national character the Director, once appointed, will hold consultations with stakeholders in the States and Territories. Meanwhile, we trust that with your help, we can assist in disseminating information of practical and professional interest to all those working in this field.

Please direct correspondence and inquiries to the following interim address:

The Director,
 Australian Domestic and Family Violence
 Clearinghouse,
 School of Social Work, University of New South
 Wales, Sydney, 2052.

Telephone: (02) 9385 1833

Fax: (02) 9662 8991

Legislation and Policies

Justice and Change (ACT)

Improving criminal justice responses to domestic and family violence has been an objective of people in the field for many years. The ACT, along with other jurisdictions, has begun to implement a coordinated criminal justice response. The ACT's Inter-agency Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP) is inspired by developments overseas, including Duluth (USA).

The implementation and operational complexities the FVIP has faced have been considerable. A national conference, *Justice and Change*, was hosted by the ACT in September and was designed to air and explore some of these issues. One hundred and fifty delegates from around the country heard keynote presentations from Australia, the USA, Canada, England, and New Zealand on topics such as:

- the dilemmas and challenges of tackling family and domestic violence for the 21st century
- lessons from Duluth and Beyond - key concepts and principles in developing coordinated responses to domestic violence
- the future for proactive policing of family and domestic violence
- balancing victim interests with prosecution imperatives
- integrating programs for perpetrators within coordinated responses
- respecting cultural diversity in building criminal justice responses to family and domestic violence.

The keynote papers will be made available by the end of December, 1999. Contact: melinda.tynan@act.gov.au or (02) 6217 4432

Indigenous Family Violence

The *Justice and Change* conference was preceded by a two day workshop for Indigenous peoples on family violence. This workshop and the Indigenous components of the conference were warmly received.

NSW Police Domestic Violence Standing Operation Procedures

The NSW Police Service developed and implemented its first Domestic Violence Standing Operating procedures in 1997. This first document provided frameworks to assist officers to understand their responsibilities when responding to domestic violence matters.

Feedback from the field over the ensuing months indicated a need to review the Domestic Violence Standing Operating Procedures. This information was fed back through the newly established State Domestic Violence Council. The Council's role is to foster best practice, review policy and project development and provide support and guidance to officers in the field.

The Council asked Operational Programs Branch to begin a consultation process to review the document. The brief was to ensure that the new document would clearly reflect the Police Service policy position and provide a comprehensive guide for officers.

The new document is due for completion in December 1999. It will further add to the knowledge base of officers by providing information about Aboriginal community issues, responding to the needs of young people and

children and understanding perpetrator behaviours to name but a few areas covered in the document. The document will be promoted and implemented through the Police Service Weekly, the Intranet and training at all levels.

For more information, contact: Tracey Hales, Acting Services Programs Officer, Operational Programs Branch, NSW Police. Ph. (02) 9339 5239

Revision of NSW Health Domestic Violence Policy

The NSW Department of Health is undertaking a review of the NSW Health Domestic Violence Policy. The review will examine the changes to the infrastructure, legislation and service provision that have been introduced since the adoption of the current policy in 1993. The review will assess the impact of these changes on the provision of health services to victims of domestic violence.

The Discussion Paper raises a number of issues including:

- Proposed changes to the definition of domestic violence
- Clarification of NSW Health workers' legal obligations regarding reporting to the NSW Police Service and confidentiality issues.

The most significant proposal is to introduce procedures to routinely assess female patients in certain health services to determine their experience of domestic violence. Drug and Alcohol Services, Mental Health Services, Accident and Emergency Services and Antenatal Services will be the focus of this proposal, as significant numbers of people who experience domestic violence attend these services. This proposal will enhance the level of service provided to victims of domestic violence in NSW Health services through earlier identification of victims' needs.

Copies of the NSW Health Domestic Violence Policy Discussion Paper and the Draft NSW Health Domestic Violence Model Procedures Manual can be found at the NSW Health internet site **Health WEB: HYPERLINK** <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au>, or by contacting the Better Health Centre on (02) 9816 0452.

Tracey Hales, Health Services Policy Branch,
NSW Health, LMB 961,
North Sydney NSW 2059
Email: thale@doh.health.nsw.gov.au

Phone: (02) 9391 9240
Fax: (02) 9391 9615
Toll free telephone and TTY: 1800 639 398
(outside Sydney area only)

Practice Notes

Best Practice Model (WA)

A Best Practice Model for the provision of programs for victims of domestic violence has been developed as part of the Western Australia Government's implementation of strategies contained in the Family and Domestic Violence Action Plan of 1995. The Best Practice Model is an attempt to collect and collate the existing knowledge and expertise within both community organisations and government agencies to ensure that consistent standards of service are offered to victims of family and domestic violence.

Essential Principles

The underlying assumptions on which the Best Practice Model is based include :

- *human rights* - domestic violence consists of a range of behaviours used to control another in intimate relationships. It is a violation of basic human rights as people are entitled to live in dignity, free from fear and harm;
- *responsibility for the violence* - the perpetrators are responsible for their actions. The notion of blame being attributed to the victim is not acceptable;
- *empowerment* - services will incorporate ways of intervening and responding that

promote the safety of victims and assist victims to make their own choices from an informed position;

- *access and equity* - all victims are entitled to access services which are provided in a fair and equitable manner;
- *criminality* - services will acknowledge that domestic violence includes behaviours which are criminal offences and interventions by workers will support a criminal justice focus;
- *cultural diversity* - victims are entitled to services that respect their cultural and linguistic diversity and provide appropriate responses;
- *quality of service* - victims and their dependants are entitled to confidential and professional services relevant to their circumstances, that are delivered by trained, skilled and supervised workers;
- *context of domestic violence* - service providers need to have an understanding of the social, cultural and political context in which domestic violence is perpetrated, as well as recognise that the majority of victims are women and children.

Best Practice Model, published by the Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, Women's Policy Development Office (May, 1999), includes chapters on Special Issues, Varying Modes of Service, Empowerment Principles, Safety Principles, Essential Criteria for Service Delivery, and other matters.

Published by :
Domestic Violence Prevention Unit,
1st Floor, Hartley Poynton Building,
141 St George's Terrace, Perth WA 6000.

Phone: (08) 9264 1920;
Fax: (08) 9264 1924
Email: wpdo@fcs.wa.gov.au

Referrals Related to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

NSW Women's Information and Referral Service
1/1/1999 – 31/10/1999

The Women's Information and Referral Service (WIRS) is a first-stop contact point for women seeking up-to-date, accurate referral information about organisations and services for women in NSW on a range of issues such as:

- violence against women and children
- legal questions, such as divorce, separation and custody
- child care
- housing
- health
- work, education and training

Statistics

The statistical information has been drawn from calls made to the Women's Information and Referral Service. Two or more categories may need to be considered together as staff may record calls differently, for example as violence or accommodation, depending on their individual judgement.

Calls to WIRS, 1 January 1999–31 October 1999

1999	Number of Calls
January	631
February	847
March	775
April	551
May	619
June	828
July	1004
August	864
September	647
October	617

Categories Subcategory	Number of calls	% of Total Calls
Accommodation (12 subcategories) Crisis/refuge	381	4.8
Violence (10 subcategories) Domestic Violence/Prevention/Counselling Sexual/Physical Harassment/ Assault Domestic Violence Violence against children Sexual assault Incest	310 171 131 33 2 2	3.9 2.1 1.6 .4 .1 .1
Caring / Support (11 subcategories) Families Support Group Domestic Violence/Prevention/Counselling	187 87 1	2.3 1.1 .1
Health (24 subcategories) Counselling Drug/Alcohol Abuse Gambling	670 11 7	8.4 .1 .1
Legal (15 subcategories) Family Law/Divorce Advice/Aid/Advocacy Custody Child support maintenance Courts Criminal Custody/Access Police Domestic Violence Domestic Violence Counselling	800 538 117 61 15 12 5 2 2 2	10.0 6.7 1.5 .8 .2 .2 .1 .1 .1 .1

New Publications/Reviews

Each issue of the *Newsletter* will contain a review of a significant recent publication. Sometimes the review will be prepared by someone associated with the Clearinghouse, at other times we will publish contributed work, of which the following piece by Kerrie James is an example. The object of these reviews is to generate public debate and we would welcome contributions by readers.

Domestic Violence in Australia: Are Women and Men Equally Violent?

Heady, B., Scott, D., deVaus, D. (1999) *Domestic violence in Australia: Are women and men equally violent?* Melbourne: Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research.

Reviewed by Kerrie James, Clinical Director, Relationships Australia (NSW)

This paper reports on an investigation into the prevalence of domestic violence committed by men and women; the extent of injuries sustained and the extent of inter-generational transmission of violence. The authors undertook a survey of 804 men and 839 women who were in relationships but were not partnered to each other.

The study found an almost equal prevalence of women and men perpetrating physical violence. These were controversial findings, triggering considerable debate in the media.

The study reported that:

- men and women report almost equal rates of assault on them by their partners - men 5.7% and women 3.7%;
- more women than men report feeling intimidated and afraid (7.6% of women and 4% of men);

- violence runs in couples - 54% of respondents who reported they had been assaulted, also admitted assaulting their partners;
- men and women are equally likely to inflict serious injury;
- there is some evidence for inter-generational transmission of violence. Men who are the sons of violent fathers were significantly more likely than the sons of non violent fathers to report being violent themselves, and to being victims of violence or both.

There are a number of troubling aspects of this study. On the face of it, it is true that many studies have found that women and men both equally engage in physically violent acts in couple relationships. Men do not corner the market in relation to their capacity to inflict violence. Some women's violence has been found to be explosively dangerous and women's violence needs to be taken seriously (James, 1996; Campbell, 1996).

However, studies such as this are limited and tend to simplify issues which are actually complex. Simplification occurs when researchers use methods that rely on counting "acts" of violence. Self-reporting also relies on people telling the truth, which is a vexed issue in domestic violence research.

In order to “count” violence, such studies need to use an extremely narrow definition of violence. This definition excludes a range of practices, such as intimidation, torture, sexual violence and coercion, stalking or holding someone prisoner.

Such a method is not able to consider the impact of a combination of different types of violence on the victim, but can only deal with a range of “acts” from less to more severe. The differential impact on victims of these acts is not evaluated.

If they did include a consideration of different types of violence, it would be apparent that the majority of women are not able to inflict the degree of control and intimidation men are capable of perpetrating on women (Jacobson et al, 1994). Although women are capable of throwing a pan of boiling water or clawing at a man with sharp fingernails, this degree of explosive violence is relatively rare. In most instances, women’s lesser physical strength means they cannot inflict severe injury and are only more likely to put themselves at risk.

Another difference between men and women’s violence which does not emerge from this or other similar studies is that women’s violence usually arises from stress rather than an intention to dominate and control their partner. Men’s violence in contrast, arises from an intention to dominate and control (Campbell, 1996). Men have been known to be extremely violent while carefully avoiding signs of injury, for example, threatening a woman at gun point; dragging her out of bed and making her dig in the garden and other acts of intimidation (Scutt, 1983).

In this study, men’s claims to be victims of their partner’s physical violence does not reveal the extent of fear or intimidation they experience, nor the extent of the injury. Most men report

being unafraid of their partner’s violence, unlike women (Campbell, 1993; Jacobson et al., 1994). The authors do acknowledge that their findings about the extent of injury and pain claimed by men to be inflicted on them by women, needs further corroboration.

This however, raises the issue of the reliability of men’s accounts of their own violence. When corroborating evidence is available, it is often found that men who are violent have minimised the extent and severity of their violence. The majority of men in our violence programs who admit to being violent, have in our interviews and data collection, minimised or not claimed the extent of their violence. Unless researchers have some way of checking these men’s accounts, then the data remain open to challenge.

Finally, if more men murder their female partners than the reverse, which is the case, it is likely that the murders are not single acts of violence out of the blue. There is usually a long history of severe violence by the man, culminating in murder. It is also well known that where murders are committed by women, the male victims have also been violent for many years.

These facts alone would indicate that the differences between men’s and women’s violence are significant, and measuring the number of violent acts committed by each obscures the severity of women’s suffering.

References

Scutt, J (1983) *Even in the Best of Homes*, Penguin, Victoria.

Jacobson, N., Gottman, J., Waltz, I., Rushe, R., Babcock, J., and Holtzworth-Munroe, A., (1994), Affect, verbal content, psychophysiology in the arguments of couples with a violent husband, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 62, No. 5, pp. 982-988.

James, K. (1999) *Truth or Fiction: Men as victims of domestic violence*, Challenging Silence, Breckenridge, J., and Laing, L., Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Campbell, A. (1996) *Out of Control, Men, Women and Aggression*, Pandoro Press, U.K.

Young People and Domestic Violence (VIC)

The “Supporting Children and Young People who have been affected by Family Violence” project was funded as part of *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence*. The project involved the development of seven reports and a brochure promoting the reports. Each report documents the practice of the participating agencies in working with children and young people affected by family violence. The brochure is currently being printed and will be broadly distributed to promote the reports and to provide contact information on the participating agencies.

The “Identifying Family Violence” project involved the development of a family violence resource kit and training package for General Practitioners in the Western Region. The

resource kit, also undertaken *under Partnerships Against Domestic Violence*, is being produced by Women’s Health West and the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre. The resource kit is designed to be a quick reference guide, providing information on the indicators of family violence and the referral details of key family violence agencies.

Contact
Claire McFerran,
Program/Policy Adviser Family Violence
Department of Human Services, Victoria
ph. 03 9616 7454 or
e:mail claire.mcferran@dhs.vic.gov.au

Research Findings/Initiatives

Reshaping Responses to Domestic Violence

Dale Bagshaw, Donna Chung, Murray Couch, Sandra Lilburn & Ben Wadham -University of South Australia

In 1998 the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative funded research to investigate the needs of women, men and young people who have been involved in domestic violence

situations. The aim of the research was to inform the design/implementation of effective strategies and interventions to prevent domestic violence based on a current analysis of the needs of victims, perpetrators and also young people who have witnessed domestic violence. These strategies were inclusive of people from Aboriginal, rural, migrant, lesbian and gay communities.

Research methodology

The methodology involved: a literature review to identify current research and initiatives in the prevention of domestic violence; a phone-in over two days to target the various groups ensuring participants' anonymity (121 callers); and focus groups with women, men and young people, lesbians and service providers for people from Aboriginal and non-English speaking backgrounds.

Needs of women who experienced domestic violence

The research showed domestic violence victims had incredibly high levels of commitment to their relationships and nobody left after a few incidents of violence and abuse. A common response to women living in situations of domestic violence is to ask: "Why don't you leave?" The participants described this as one of the most unhelpful responses to women experiencing domestic violence.

The pressure to remain in a relationship and not have it 'fail' was a major reason for many women remaining and was often reinforced by family, friends and work colleagues. Constant threats and intimidation also made women fearful of leaving.

Services and support

Informal networks were often women's first source of help for domestic violence and their responses were critical in determining future courses of action. This research points to the need for public education initiatives that aim to help family, friends and workmates respond appropriately and effectively when people disclose domestic violence. Service providers, such as doctors and police, also need further education and training to assist them to identify domestic violence, establish or adhere to appropriate protocols, respond effectively and

make appropriate referrals. The female victims stressed the need for unconditional support from a friend, family member or professionals who maintained their links despite the perpetrator's behaviour; and the need to be asked *specifically* and *directly* about violence and abuse in their relationship.

Community education

Women talked frequently about the need for easy access to affordable help and for domestic violence to be more widely understood in the community as including more than physical abuse. Non-physical forms of domestic violence, such as emotional abuse and threats and intimidation, were reported to be equally devastating in their effects but were rarely recognised as domestic violence.

New areas of intervention

Post separation violence was identified as an ongoing concern for many women. Increased support is required during this time as women reported that, in spite of the introduction of stalking laws, they are likely to re-enter the abusive relationship rather than live with the fear and uncertainty of stalking.

Needs of men who are perpetrators of domestic violence

The male participants in this research were primarily perpetrators of domestic violence. An overarching theme was that the victim/perpetrator distinction did not capture the ambivalence they experienced in naming their place in domestic violence. However, such a distinction is needed to maintain a focus on the responsibility that perpetrators must take if the incidence of domestic violence is to be diminished. Men's commitment to change was primarily motivated by their own personal investment in making their own lives better and saving or improving their relationship. This is

an important consideration for the future targeting of services to men who are perpetrators of domestic violence. The dominant male culture was seen to promote their ongoing use of violence, with limited support offered to stop or prevent violent behaviour. Whilst men's groups were seen as supportive and helpful they often could not meet the need for on-going support, as they were time-limited.

Men felt that dominant ideas and beliefs about masculinity and the ways they were raised as men limited their ability to: communicate within relationships, understand their role in relationships and to deal with the pressures of relationships and daily life. There is a continuing need for community based awareness programs to work with young men to prevent and stop violence, and for services to contribute to men's education in life skills, communication and relationship skills.

Needs of children and young people

Both parents and young people stated that it would be of great benefit if teachers were more aware of the effects of domestic violence on children at school. This would assist teachers 'to make sense' of students' behaviour and to support students more effectively. Many parents and young people also reported an urgent need for respectful behaviours and constructive conflict resolution skills to be taught from an early age to all students in schools.

When parents had left violent relationships most wanted to give their children the opportunity to talk through what had happened as a means of reducing the long-term impact of the abuse. However, parents involved in the research found very little help that was effective for their children. Those parents whose children had used counselling found it to be ineffective and

inappropriate for two reasons. First, the children perceived counselling as a punishment and to be inferring that they, not their parent, were 'having a problem'. Secondly, participants indicated that counsellors' responses were frequently focussed on the anti-social behaviours of the children and not on what parents saw as the underlying experience of domestic violence that had precipitated these behaviours. There was a general view that the long-term impact of fear on children was not adequately understood or dealt with by counsellors. The ineffectiveness and scarcity of services for children were seen as issues to be addressed through developing responsive intervention systems and improving access to professionals with expertise in working with children who have experienced domestic violence. The young people interviewed in focus groups also spoke of the need to be able to disclose their experience of domestic violence in a trusting environment that would not necessarily lead to mandatory notification.

Additional findings

The research report, *Reshaping Responses to Domestic Violence*, also covers the special needs of men, women and children from diverse backgrounds including: non-English speaking, gay and lesbian, those from rural and remote areas and indigenous communities. The research has demonstrated the need for new terminology, more inclusive theories of relationship abuse and a greater diversity of approaches to domestic violence.

A summary report and/or a complete report of this research project, including the detailed phone-in data and research instruments, are available from DAS Distribution, Ph. (02) 6202 5736; Fax: (06) 6202 5788

Forthcoming Seminars, Conferences

Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Showcase

Showcasing of *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* projects are being held in capital cities and regional centres over the next two years. Showcasing seminars have already been held in

Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. The remainder of the schedule to-date is as follows:

PARTNERSHIPS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
SHOWCASING SEMINARS FOR 1999/2000

Date	State/Territory	Venue	State Contact
16 December 1999	South Australia	Adelaide Balyana Hospitality and Conference Centre 46 Strathcona Ave Clapham 5062 Ph. (08) 8374 3074 Fax. (08) 8374 2365	Sue Foster (08) 8226 6718
February 2000	New South Wales	Albury/Wodonga	Karen McLean (02) 6058 1850
February 2000	Western Australia	Perth	Carole Kagi (08) 9264 1918
February 2000	ACT	TBA	Karen Greenland (02) 6207 0595

Internet Sites

The following are some web-sites of relevance to the field of domestic violence. We look forward to including your suggestions in future issues.

Australian Institute of Criminology

<http://www.aic.gov.au/institute/index.html>

Note: A recent publication in the Australian Institute of Criminology *Trends and Issues* series, No. 135, November 1999, 'Women's Fear of Violence in the Community' (authors Carlos Carcach and Satyanshu Mukherjee), will be of interest to many readers of the *Newsletter*. The authors state that their findings are consistent with theoretical expectations regarding the role that vulnerability, in particular social and economic vulnerability, plays in the formation of women's perceptions of personal safety in the community. Women of non-English speaking background express heightened concern about personal safety in the community. The paper will be summarised in greater detail in the next issue of the *Newsletter*, but the following contact details are provided for those who wish to obtain a copy of the document.

The Australian Institute of Criminology
 GPO Box 2944
 Canberra ACT 2601

Ph. (02) 6260 9200
 Fax. (02) 6260 9201

Australian Law on the Internet

<http://www.nla.gov.au/oz/law.html>

D.V. Update - The latest D.V. research

<http://www.dvupdate.com/home.html>

Family and Domestic Violence Training Package

<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/publications/fdupktoc.html>

National Crime Prevention

<http://www.ncp.gov.au>

Partnerships Against Domestic Violence

<http://www.dpvc.gov.au/osw/padv/index.html>

WISE D.V. Information Manual

<http://www.infochange.net.au/wise/DVIM>

World Wide Web Resources for Social Workers.

<http://www.nyu.edu/socialwork/wwwrsw/>

(Click on 'Search and General Indexes', type 'Domestic Violence' in the search space; click on 'Go').

We look forward to receiving material for inclusion in forthcoming Newsletters.

Planned dates of publication of newsletters in 2000 are as follows:

<i>Date of Publication</i>	<i>Material for inclusion needed by:</i>
<i>24th March, 2000</i>	<i>21 February, 2000</i>
<i>28th June, 2000</i>	<i>5th June, 2000</i>
<i>25th September, 2000</i>	<i>4th September, 2000</i>
<i>11th December, 2000</i>	<i>13th November, 2000</i>

The March 2000 Newsletter will background the newly appointed Director of the Clearinghouse, and will include information under the headings mentioned in the introduction to this issue. Issue Papers will be published on the following dates: 1st March, 2000; 1 June, 2000; 1 September, 2000, 1 December, 2000.