

Australian Domestic & Family Violence



CLEARINGHOUSE

newsletter

CLEARINGHOUSE NEWS

Website

THE Clearinghouse website can now be reached directly at:

<http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au>

Bookmark this address and visit it frequently, as new material will be added regularly. It currently provides access to Clearinghouse publications, annotated links to useful Australian and international websites, and information on new publications. From August 1, the website will have two searchable databases – *Research and Resources* and *Good Practice*. The *Research and Resources* database will specialise in Australian publications, with selected international publications.

Good Practice database

THIS database is being developed to assist those working with domestic and family violence to keep in touch with what others across the country are doing. It will contain examples of practice which:

- Demonstrate a clearly articulated rationale
- Incorporate current theoretical and research developments
- Operationalise core principles of victim safety and perpetrator accountability
- Contribute to effective interagency practice
- Demonstrate the capacity for replication
- Demonstrate processes for monitoring implementation and results
- Have been evaluated and/or are innovative

The initial entries focus mainly on practice with children, young people and their families. However, our aim is to develop a comprehensive database of practice aimed at a broad range of target groups (eg: service providers; women; Indigenous communities; agencies; perpetrators; rural communities; remote communities; non-English-speaking communities) and utilising a broad range of intervention modes (eg support; co-ordination; groupwork; crisis

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intervention; peer education; training; community education; advocacy; counselling; research; community development; policing; prosecution; early intervention; prevention).

If you are interested in registering your program in this database, please contact the Clearinghouse for further information.

Lodging information with the Clearinghouse

PLEASE remember to lodge a copy of any domestic and family violence material which you produce with the Clearinghouse. This includes policy documents, training packages, conference and research papers, brochures, posters etc. This assists us to provide comprehensive information about Australian publications and resources. While our collection commenced formally on 1 January, 2000, we are interested in all Australian material.

Survey

IF YOU have not yet returned the client survey form which was included in Newsletter No. 2, we would appreciate your taking the time to do so. The survey will assist the Clearinghouse to identify any 'gaps' in those being reached and to prioritise topics for information development, issues papers and future research. Contact the Clearinghouse if you need a copy of the survey form.

Newsletter contributions

OUR aim is to bring you an interesting range of developments from across Australia. Your contributions are vital to this, so please don't hesitate to keep us up to date with the work you are doing. September issue contributions are needed by 30 August, 2000.

LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

Preventing domestic violence in South Australia

DOMESTIC violence can be prevented in a number of ways and by a range of services and agencies. Prevention activities relating to domestic violence can include those which focus on:

- preventing violence from happening at all
- reducing the frequency or rate of violence

- reducing the severity of violence and its impact
- supporting people to develop and maintain positive relationships

In South Australia, many government, non-government and community sector organisations are involved in prevention work. The focus of the work varies depending upon the roles and responsibilities of the organisations. Many innovative ways of preventing domestic violence have been developed by the community and non-government sector. These tend to focus on preventing violence from happening at all. Government agencies have also recognised their roles and responsibilities. For example, the Department of Education Training and Employment has developed curriculum aimed at domestic violence prevention.

More recently, the role of agencies of the criminal justice system has been identified as important in domestic violence prevention. On the basis that, by definition, the criminal justice system becomes involved after an event has occurred, 'prevention' of domestic violence within the criminal justice agency framework can mean:

- reducing repeat victimisation
- decreasing the severity of violent behaviour;
- increasing the time lapse between incidents;
- reducing the capacity of the offender to offend again (perhaps with other victims).

Repeat victimisation is a clear phenomenon of domestic violence, with international studies suggesting that victims experience between six and 30 incidents of domestic violence before reporting to police. Consequently, working to reduce repeat victimisation can have a significant impact on prevention work.

Two approaches are being piloted in South Australia. Funded through the Crime Prevention Unit of the Attorney-General's Department, the first pilot project is the NDV Project. This project works with police and seeks to enhance the way police respond to domestic violence call-outs and follow through with the incident. The second is the Violence Intervention Project (VIP) model, which provides a co-ordinated, inter-agency response to families presenting to the courts on domestic violence related incidents. The VIP model has been developed through funding provided by the Department of Human Service.

Both of the pilot projects are being individually evaluated to assess the effect they have in reducing the incidence, and impact, of domestic violence. The evaluations of each pilot project will also be considered to assess the way in which the projects

have the capacity to interact across the criminal justice system, so forming a systemic response to the issue, from police call-outs to court processes.

NDV Project

The NDV Pilot Project is located in two police local service areas in metropolitan Adelaide. It aims to reduce the incidence of repeat victimisation of domestic violence in these two areas. The rationale of the project is based on a similar model in Leeds, United Kingdom*. A three-tiered program of operational interventions is implemented by police to domestic violence related incidences reported to police. The model relies on measures of increasing intensity, where Level 1 measures are introduced after the first police attendance, Level 2 after the second, and Level 3 after the third. In the model, both the victim and offender are provided with responses at each level. In the case of the victim, increasing levels of support are offered (this can include at level 3 the offer of a duress alarm in specific circumstances). For the offender, more progressive measures of intervention are implemented to constrain the offender's behaviour (including charging the offender at level 3, though of course this can also occur at level 1).

The project has been 'in the field' for 3 months, and will be piloted for 12 months in both local service areas. In the first 2 months of operation, over 200 interventions were carried out through the project. A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process is running alongside the project's operations. Feedback is being received from service providers, all levels of police operations (including patrols, Child and Family Investigation Unit officers, senior management), as well as other agencies. Victims and offenders will be surveyed as part of the program evaluation and a comprehensive database has been established for evaluation purposes. To date, feedback has been very positive. Two of the benefits of the project recognised to date are that the responsibility is placed on the offender to change behaviour and that the police have a structured way of dealing with the issue.

VIP model

The Violence Intervention Project is located in two areas, the northern metropolitan and central areas of Adelaide. Originally, the model was based on the approach taken in Duluth, Minnesota USA. Since its inception in South Australia it has been adapted. This has included building on the capacity of the Duluth model to work with families. The VIP model involves providing a co-ordinated response to victims, offenders and children involved in the family when a domestic violence related incident comes to the

attention of the criminal justice system, and in particular, the court. In both pilot locations, a women's worker, children's worker and offender worker are engaged to provide support to the family on a case by case basis (inter-agency team). Referrals (either mandated by court, or voluntary) to perpetrator programs also form an integral part of the model.

In addition to the case worker services provided through the inter-agency team, specialist domestic violence intervention services are put in place. These include a dedicated Domestic Violence Court, and police prosecutors. Through the model, these specialist court services interact with the inter-agency team to provide a highly structured, co-ordinated response to the families presenting to the court for domestic violence related incidents.

While the operation of the VIP model in the two locations differs in some elements (for example, the point of referral may vary between Northern VIP and Central VIP), the rationale for the co-ordinated inter-agency response model remains. This is to increase the level of safety in families targeted by the VIP as a result of a reduced incidence of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is traditionally a difficult area for the criminal justice system, as it involves the State intervening at a difficult period in people's lives. Consequently, this work is innovative and challenging. Located within the criminal justice system, the NDV and VIP projects are based around the principles of early intervention, prevention and reduction, problem solving and providing co-ordinated responses for families (through services for victims, perpetrators, and children). The evaluations of both projects (NDV and VIP) could point to new and effective ways in which the South Australian criminal justice system responds to domestic violence.

* Arresting Evidence; Domestic Violence and Repeat Victimisation. Police Research Series Paper 104, Home Office. Jalna Hanmer, Sue Griffiths, David Jerwood.
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/prgpubs/fprs104.pdf>

Further information

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Family violence and the protection of high risk infants

Christina Fleischer, A/Assistant Director, Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Branch, Department of Human Services, Victoria introduced her presentation to the Melbourne Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Forum with the following case study:

A young couple is in their kitchen in the midst of a loud, violent exchange. The father has thrown a plate against the wall in rage and is threatening to hit the mother if she does not clean it up. The mother has a physical disability and is in a leg brace and requires crutches. A screaming infant is heard in the next room. The father yells at the mother to “shut the f___g baby up” as it has been “screaming for hours”. The mother cries, “I don’t know what’s wrong. I gave him a bottle and some Panadol to put him to sleep, but he just keeps crying”.

The frequency of family violence within child protection cases is of great concern. The Child Protection data collection system, CASIS, indicates that at least 55% of investigated families have family violence as a feature. A case file review of a representative sample of infant cases undertaken as part of the evaluation of the *High Risk Infants Service Quality Initiatives Project* (HRI Project) found family violence in 75% of cases, usually as part of a cluster of other equally concerning risk factors.

As reflected in this case study, living in a violent environment has serious, immediate and long-lasting, or irreversible, effects on infants. In addition to the physical danger for infants, studies have shown that effects on infants exposed to ongoing violence over time can include:

- poor general health
- poor sleeping habits
- excessive screaming
- distorted emotional development including attachment disorders
- permanently altered development of the infant’s central nervous system resulting in ongoing levels of anxiety, hyperactivity and mood disorders.

Ms Fleischer described good practice initiatives being developed and implemented in this practice area. Many of these initiatives have received an impetus from the HRI Project either by way of development, resources, policy direction or learning from research. *Specialist Infant Protective Workers*, with specialist knowledge about family violence, have been

established within each Child Protection Services region. As research indicates family violence is likely to commence or increase during pregnancy and one study notes 40% – 60% of abused women stated they were physically harmed during pregnancy, the HRI Project has actively encouraged the involvement of Child Protection Services to support families prior to the birth of their child if there are concerns that the child may be at high risk of harm following birth.

Ms Fleischer stressed the need for Child Protection and Family Violence Services to move forward towards a better working partnership. She stated that a joint initiative of Child Protection and Family Violence Services has received Commonwealth funding and will proceed at a Divisional policy level in the near future. The initiative aims to develop a joint practice strategy for collaboration between Family Violence and Child Protection Services.

Further information

Johanna Breen, Child Protection & Juvenile Justice,
Ph: 03 9616 9787

Claire McFerran, Family & Individual Support ,
Ph: 03 9616 7454

Review of responses to domestic violence in Queensland

FAMILIES, Youth and Community Care Queensland has undertaken a review of current responses to domestic violence in Queensland. The Review covered the effectiveness of service models, advisory mechanisms, policy development and program implementation processes. It also incorporated the findings of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Taskforce on Violence Report, released in December 1999.

The findings of the Review were released in a Report during Domestic Violence Prevention Week in May 2000. In June, a State Domestic and Family Violence Conference – “2000 and Beyond: Planning the Way Forward” – discussed the results of the Review and strategies to enhance current responses. The conference brought together a variety of government and non-government agencies working in the area of domestic and family violence prevention. A particular focus of the Conference was enhancing service provision and prevention strategies for Indigenous communities affected by family violence. Themes addressed at the Conference included:

- access and equity
- strategic alliances to achieve common goals
- moving forward together

The Report of the Review and the outcomes of the Conference will contribute to the development of a whole-of-government policy and an action plan for future responses to domestic and family violence.

Legislative developments in Queensland

SIGNIFICANT amendments to the *Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989* were proclaimed on 12 May 2000. The amendments improve the implementation of the legislation, reduce unnecessary burdens on the police and courts and enable couples in same sex relationships to apply for a protection order on the same basis as couples in opposite sex relationships. Copies of the amended Act are available from Go Print, the Queensland Government Printing Office.

Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland has undertaken consultation in 35 locations across the State on legislative options for non-spousal domestic violence. Specifically, options for a civil legislative response to family violence, abuse by carers and abuse in dating relationships are being considered. The consultation process included a specific strategy for remote Indigenous communities. The results of the consultations are currently being collated.

PRACTICE NOTES

Child protection education in NSW Government schools

Child Protection Education: Curriculum materials to support teaching and learning in Personal Development, Health and Physical Education have been developed by the NSW Department of Education and Training to provide child protection education to students in every Stage from Kindergarten to Year 10. The curriculum materials have been distributed to more than 2,200 schools and pre-schools across the State.

The child protection education materials include teaching and learning about all forms of child abuse. Multicultural and Aboriginal perspectives are incorporated and the range of child protection issues includes abuse between peers (including harassment, bullying and dating violence), physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, domestic violence and organised abuse (paedophilia).

Child protection education aims to assist students to develop skills in:

- recognising and responding to unsafe situations
- seeking assistance effectively
- establishing and maintaining non-coercive relationships and strengthening attitudes and values related to equality, respect and responsibility.

The mandatory key learning area of Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) provides an excellent framework for the implementation of child protection education activities. The PDHPE syllabuses provide structured opportunities for teaching about sensitive issues in a sequential, coherent and balanced way and in an appropriate context for particular groups of students.

Community support for child protection education is fundamental to its effectiveness. The Departmental requirement that parents and caregivers be informed about school programs is a powerful tool in raising awareness and discussion of the issues across the broader community. Letters that assist teachers to involve their communities, translated into 20 community languages, have been provided to schools. A package to assist schools in conducting awareness-raising activities with parent and community groups about the Department's approach in child protection has been developed. It includes a video, overhead transparencies and handouts. These have also been translated into community languages.

Education in this area is sensitive and challenging for school communities. Case studies and unfinished stories in child protection education accurately reflect the relevant characteristics and dynamics of abuse in a way that is appropriate to the student's age. It is important to give students enough information so that, if faced with a situation of potential abuse, they can react quickly and seek protection effectively. Teaching and learning activities explicitly address child protection issues in a safe and supportive context which is reassuring to children and young people.

The approach is taken that abuse can occur in all kinds of relationships — at home, at school, at work, in the community. It can occur in relationships which are close and others which are 'not close'. The paradigm of positive relationships allows teaching and learning to focus on a developing understanding and commitment to participating in positive, non-coercive relationships.

Parents and teachers report that children who have taken part in child protection education show increased confidence and are better able to communicate any worries about personal safety to appropriate adults who can help them.

Further information

Wendy Alford, Senior Education Officer,
Student Services and Equity Programs,
NSW Department of Education and Training
Ph: (02) 9886 7668; Fax: (02) 9886 7543.

Curriculum materials can be purchased from
EduSales: Ph: (02) 9822 7270; Fax: (02) 9822 7511

The 'Savvy Schools' project, Queensland

Students affected by domestic and family violence are in our schools every day. Some cope well, some struggle, and some will be in crisis. Schools that are savvy – that know and understand the issues – can do much to support them.

Toward this end, an information and training package for school communities is being developed under the working title of the 'Savvy Schools' project. This project is funded under the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative and coordinated by the Equity Programs Unit, Student Services Branch, Education Queensland.

During May 2000 feedback on the draft was gathered at school community forums around the state. The kit will be made available to state primary, secondary and special schools throughout Queensland. It contains up to date information on domestic and family violence issues, including likely impacts on the health, education and wellbeing of children and young people. The package includes ideas for planning and developing school responses, and suggests activities to inform and involve staff and parent groups.

The kit encourages the school to work with specialist agencies within its community, raising awareness and breaking the silence which can isolate victims. Links are also made to Education Queensland's Child Protection policy and the fostering of safe, supportive school environments. The kit should be available by August 2000.

Further information

Janice Parker or Louise Ireland Ph: (07) 3235 4220.

“Human rights: what has domestic violence got to do with it?” – a hypothetical

FEMINIST Stateswoman Anne Summers led a two and half hour 'Hypothetical' at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on 12 May. The event was organised by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre (DVRC), Brisbane, in conjunction with Domestic Violence Prevention Week 2000.

The Hypothetical panel comprised: Hon. Anna Bligh, Queensland Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care; Kate Gilmore, National Director of Amnesty International; Boni Robertson, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Taskforce On Violence Chairperson; Sussan Brennan, Barrister-at-Law and YWCA's United Nations Delegate; Associate Professor Ruth Busch, eminent domestic violence legal reformist; Leanne Spelleken, Family Court Judicial Registrar; Andrew Bartlett, Australian Democrats' Senator; Dawson Ruhl, Director, Family Court Counselling WA; Alison Cotes, Courier-Mail columnist and Doug Winten, Co-Deputy Chair of the Queensland Domestic Violence Council.

The Hypothetical provided an opportunity to map and critique Australia's response to the issue of domestic violence over the past two decades, and explored broadly the concept of domestic violence as a human rights violation. Whilst the intention of the DVRC had been to dialogue the impact of enshrining domestic violence within human rights conventions and laws as they pertain to Australia, this was not sufficiently covered due to inadequacy of time. The event also included a highly entertaining and challenging presentation by Anne Summers on public/community education campaigns sponsored by Commonwealth and State governments as well as community organisations.

The event was attended by some 380 delegates who were 'glued to their chairs'; many of whom later indicated that they would have been willing to stay another couple of hours! The Hypothetical was audio-recorded and copies of the tapes can be purchased or borrowed by contacting the Domestic Violence Resource Centre.

Ph: (07) 3217 2544; Fax: (07) 3217 2679
Email: itsupport@dvrc.org.au

Creating the Future – a resource kit for working with children about domestic violence

Creating the Future is a new video resource package for working with five to twelve year old children and their families. Presented by Noni Hazlehurst and produced by Jannawi Family Centre, it features life-like puppets ‘The Jannawi Kids’ who realistically and sensitively portray children’s experiences of living with, and separating from, domestic violence. The package includes a series of eight short stories on video with activity books; a leader’s handbook; a colour poster; CD; and set of stickers featuring the puppet characters – Baby Sam, Birrilli, Sophie, Aubey, Billy, Lena, Tanika and Minh.

The video features Indigenous actors Ernie Dingo and the late Bob Mazza as narrators and the stories demonstrate respect for Indigenous reconciliation and cultural diversity.

The ‘one step removed’ approach focuses on the issues faced by the Jannawi Kids and their families and assists children to:

- Recognise and talk about violence and abuse
- Understand the effects on their lives and relationships, and
- Identify strategies to develop alternative and positive family relationships and friendships.

An Aboriginal-specific module, *Maybe Tomorrow* (*Murruga Burrapur* in the Darug language) features story teller Pauline McLeod. This story, and the story ‘Billy’s Blues’, are useful tools in working with boys to prevent the development of aggressive behaviours in the aftermath of domestic violence.

Creating The Future assists adults to find ways to talk with children about domestic violence, and also models effective peer support. It can be used with children, parents, grand-parents and extended family members in one-off presentations or as a series of sessions conducted in educational, welfare and therapeutic contexts.

Further information

Jannawi Family Centre
Ph: (02) 97500 500; Fax: (02) 9750 6190
Email: jannawi@vip.net.au

Sharon’s Story – a new video for young Aboriginal women

Mabourah Dubay, the Aboriginal Women’s Advisory Council to the NSW Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre, has produced an educational video on domestic violence and sexual assault for young Aboriginal women. *Sharon’s Story* depicts a young Aboriginal woman experiencing verbal, physical and sexual abuse from her boyfriend. Her three girlfriends, together with an older Aunt who has experienced the same kind of abuse, provide much-needed support and friendship. Bundjalung elder Aunty Della Walker, featured in the video, encourages young Aboriginal women to talk about these sorts of issues and ‘to do something for yourselves’.

The video provides young Aboriginal women with information about their legal rights and how they can stop violence by using the legal system. Although primarily aimed at Aboriginal women, *Sharon’s Story* is relevant to all women. Mabourah Dubay chairperson Kerrie Ellis says of the video: ‘This video is a positive step in portraying young Aboriginal women in a situation where they support each other and work together to empower themselves. Mabourah Dubay is all about Aboriginal women taking control of their own stories and ultimately their own lives.’

The establishment of Mabourah Dubay, the permanent Indigenous women’s Advisory Council to the NSW Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre, is one of the successful outcomes of the 1997 Mabourah Dubay Project. A local Bundjalung community development worker, Paula Caldwell, was employed to visit communities from Grafton to Tweed Heads over a twelve month period. She conducted informal focus groups with Aboriginal women to establish their legal problems and ability to access legal information and assistance. Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre then conducted a series of workshops on some of the more pressing issues identified by community members.

Key learnings from this project were that it is ineffective to urge Aboriginal women to seek legal advice and assistance about domestic violence if they are unfamiliar with the concept of seeking legal advice and with their legal rights and entitlements; and that to really make a difference, services have to consider structural change and proactive strategies to gain the trust and respect of Aboriginal communities.

Queensland Domestic Violence Prevention Week

QUEENSLAND'S annual Domestic Violence Prevention Week was held from 7–13 May 2000, with more than 130 community events across the State. The theme for this year's campaign was "Expect Respect". The campaign had a particular focus on young people who are just beginning to form significant, intimate relationships. Campaign materials and advertising, designed for a young audience, highlighted signs of abusive relationships and characteristics of healthy, respectful relationships. Kits of "Expect Respect" materials were distributed to about 90 schools to form the basis of workshops and discussion groups around the issue of violence in relationships and prevention strategies. The focus of the campaign proved to be highly appropriate in light of the research released by National Crime Prevention in April, revealing the prevalence of violence in young people's relationships.

Winners of the five Queensland Domestic Violence Prevention Awards also reflected the increasing focus on young people in domestic violence prevention strategies. The Award winners were:

Micah Inc. for its initiative *Young Mothers For Young Women*, which provides peer education, peer support and peer advocacy for young women affected by violence in their relationships. This initiative was developed from a participatory research project. 'I'm always waiting for something to happen', which explored the links between gender and violence in the lives of young mothers.

Rockhampton Women's Shelter for *It's Not Your Fault*, an education program that involves a one and a half-hour presentation with children in years 5, 6, and 7 and a one-hour follow-up session. The program encourages maximum participation by the children through the use of video, discussion, brainstorming ideas and role-plays and is inclusive of children, parents, and teachers.

Yarrabah Aboriginal Corporation for Women for *Yarrabah Walk Against Violence* which incorporated artwork from Yarrabah Primary and Secondary school students. This initiative provided a visual and accessible opportunity for the community to acknowledge the extent of violence in their community and to discuss appropriate ways of addressing it.

Health Outcomes Unit of Queensland Health for the *Queensland Health Domestic Violence Initiative*. This initiative involves training staff in emergency departments and antenatal care delivery areas of public hospitals to sensitively inquire of all women

presenting for care about the presence of family violence. This initiative has the ability to reach a broad range of women, particularly those who are not accessing domestic violence support services. It also contributes to shifting professional cultural views towards a better understanding of domestic violence.

Ferny Hills State School for *Songs Of Social Comment, The Domestic Violence Workshop For Year 7*. As a part of the English school program, Year 7 teachers at Ferny Hills State School cover a number of topics including war, social injustice, the environment, and issues such as homeless children and domestic violence. The domestic violence workshop uses the analysis of the lyrics of songs that contain social messages. This program is embedded in the school curriculum and as such is enduring. It highlights the links between war, social injustice and family violence in a context that is easy for the students to relate to.

Further information

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Email: hnancarr@families.qld.gov.au

Or visit the "expect respect" website:
<http://www.families.qld.gov.au/expectrespect/legislation.html>

NEW PUBLICATIONS/REVIEWS

THE February newsletter carried a brief report of 'evidence based' prosecutions which are being used in some overseas jurisdictions. There is considerable debate about the efficacy of such approaches, which can include mandatory arrest, 'no drop' prosecutions and mandatory reporting of domestic violence by medical practitioners. The article reviewed here presents one side of the debate.

'Killing her softly: intimate abuse and the violence of state intervention'

Mills, L.G. (1999) *Harvard Law Review*, 113 (2) pp. 550-613

MILLS argues that we need to reconsider the feminist position that mandatory interventions in domestic violence cases, including mandatory arrest, prosecution, and reporting, serve the best interests of all battered women. She says that after years of

indifference to intimate abuse, uniform responses to crimes between domestic partners eliminate both the state representatives' discretion and the victim's desires from the state's decision-making equation. Mills' argument is that battered women are safest and feel most respected when they willingly partner with state representatives to investigate and prosecute domestic violence crimes. Clinically speaking, a battered woman needs a healing response to the intimate abuse, one that nurtures her strengths and empowers her to act. Mandatory state interventions not only disregard these clinical concerns, but also are in danger of replicating the rejection, degradation, social isolation and emotional unresponsiveness that are endemic to the abusive relationship. In an effort to alter these abusive dynamics and promote a more respectful relationship between state representatives and battered women, Mills proposes a 'Survivor-Centred Model', relying on clinical methods that engage the battered woman, foster her healing, and promote her safety.

Mills encapsulates her views on an improved approach in the following way: 'Proceeding on the assumption that battered women are as often survivors as they are victims, I argue that mandatory state interventions rob the battered woman of an important opportunity to acknowledge and reject patterns of abuse and to partner with state representatives (law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and medical professionals) in imagining the possibility of a life without violence. Therefore, I propose an empowerment model that reverses the violent dynamic imposed on the battered woman by the batterer, a method that nurtures the survivor's need for emotional support and helps heal the wounds inflicted by the abuser.'

'Empowerment' is a much cited concept in discussion of responses to domestic violence. For Mills, the term refers to a clinical policy and program posture that assumes that battered women are in the best position to decide how to respond to the violence in their lives, unless they are otherwise found incompetent. She notes the similarity with Judith Herman's view with respect to trauma survivors, namely, that professionals should encourage trauma victims to be the architects of their own recovery by offering them support, advice, and the tools to prompt change – but no more. 'No intervention that takes power away from the survivor can possibly foster her recovery, no matter how much it appears to be in her immediate best interest.'

Mills acknowledges that mandatory interventions have some advantages, such as obliging professionals to take domestic violence seriously. An additional benefit is that the approach helps to eliminate racial discrimination, insofar as it ensures that all

perpetrators are treated similarly. Many would also argue that mandatory interventions help to keep women safe and that proactive policies structurally alter the politics of gender violence. However, Mills cites research findings that show that some groups of battered women suffer more when mandatory intervention policies go awry.

Locating woman battering within the framework of what is known about trauma, and recovery from it, Mills states that the core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. A number of faculties damaged by the traumatic experience, including trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity and intimacy, must be re-formed in relationships. Helping victims restore power and control, and diminishing their helplessness by increasing their choices can contribute significantly to reversing the negative dynamics that dominate the abusive relationship. In the case of a battered woman, this empowerment may or may not involve pursuing the arrest and prosecution of the batterer. Achieving these goals is challenging work requiring keen insight and skills which Mills details in her commentary. She also outlines ways in which mandatory state intervention can be emotionally abusing of the victim. The 'Survivor-Centered Model' proposed by Mills emphasises the importance of engaging the battered woman in ways that do not replicate the violence of the battering relationship.

RESEARCH FINDINGS/INITIATIVES

The effectiveness of legal protection in the prevention of domestic violence in the lives of young Australian women

Young, M., Biles, J. & Dobson, A. (2000) Australian Institute of Criminology, 'Trends and Issues', No. 148, March.

<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi148.html>

THERE are few studies on outcomes after protection orders. In particular, there are no Australian data on outcomes after police intervention, nor any studies here or overseas which compare the benefits of police intervention and court orders. Furthermore, there is little research on outcomes for women who do not seek legal protection compared to those who do. The indications are that in Australia only around 6 per cent of women abused by their current partner, and 35 per cent of women abused by a previous partner, reported the last incident to the police.

The study undertaken by Young et al. attempts to fill some of the gaps in our understanding of domestic violence in the community. The sample of 493 young women was drawn from participants in another national study in which women answered 'Yes' to the question: "Have you ever been in a violent relationship with a partner or spouse?" The primary focus of the second phase study was physical violence and injury rather than emotional or psychological abuse. Nearly half the young women had been subject to serious violence – beaten, choked, threatened, or attempted shooting. Seven per cent had been shot or stabbed by a partner, and about three quarters had been subject to medium severity of violence – slapped, kicked, hit with a fist, or something else that could hurt them.

Almost a third of the women sought legal intervention in an attempt to stop physical violence by their partner. The two most common actions were contacting the police only (48 per cent) and both contacting the police and obtaining a protection order (31 per cent). Seven per cent obtained a protection order only. Women who experienced the more severe levels of violence and who were injured were more likely to seek legal protection than those who were not as badly abused. Women with children were more likely to seek legal protection, as also were women who were in a de facto relationship and those whose partner had a record of violent or criminal behaviour. In contrast, there were no significant differences between women who sought legal protection and those who did not, in relation to where they lived or their socio-demographic characteristics.

From the point of view of reducing their exposure to violence, both contacting police and obtaining a court order was more effective than only contacting the police, even though the prevalence of serious physical violence before legal protection was greater in the group of women who did both. Moreover, for women who obtained help from both the police and the courts, there was no instance of increased severity of violence after legal protection and most of the group experienced substantial reductions.

The authors of the report conclude that, despite certain methodological limitations, their work provides the strongest evidence available to date that preventive strategies for young women at the early stage of a relationship can eliminate, or at least reduce, physical violence by a partner. They believe it is important to note that seeking legal protection from serious violence rarely made things worse for the young women. The results showing good outcomes for women who sought court protection orders are consistent with results of a study by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, showing that physical violence ceased for nearly all

women with a court protection order. This latter study will be reviewed in the next Clearinghouse Newsletter.

NESB older people and abuse: 'the hidden problem'

THE University of Western Sydney (Macarthur) has received funding from the Transcultural Mental Health Centre (NSW Health) for a research project working with people from non-English-speaking background around issues of abuse.

The aim of the research is to develop a model by which ethnic communities can examine the issues of abuse of older people within their community. It is anticipated the model will enable ethnic communities to explore the issue of elder abuse as it exists within their community and attempt to develop appropriate and culturally sensitive responses to that abuse.

Australia has a multicultural society with communities from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds with an increasing aged population. According to statistical data, by the year 2001 there will be approximately 660,000 older people from non-English-speaking backgrounds across Australia.

Abuse of older people occurs globally and is not new. To date, very little research is available on the incidence of 'elder abuse'. Research in America, Canada and anecdotal evidence in Australia suggest that such abuse does occur and is very much a 'hidden problem' confined within the home. Older people from non-English-speaking backgrounds have specific issues and needs which relate to their migration, settlement experience and culture and may contribute to the prevalence of abuse in their communities. However, the specific issues or types of abuse which are prevalent within different ethnic communities is unknown, as are the particular responses which may be appropriate for that community.

The research project will target particular ethnic communities and will begin with the Greek community. Consultations will be held with community workers, leaders and older people from each community, where participants can contribute to the definition of abuse of older people and identify culturally sensitive responses.

At the end of the project, a discussion paper will be made available to all services concerned with the care of older people from non-English-speaking background.

Further information

Jane Mears and Natalie Bolzan, University of Western Sydney, Ph: (02) 9772 6210 or (02) 9772 6531.

Partners for Prevention

THIS project of the ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council is a participatory research initiative. Its objective is to research and develop models of support for the family and friends who help those experiencing violence in family settings and intimate relationships. It will be inquiring about:

- help seeking and giving processes within family and friendship networks
- crucial success factors in the interaction
- other, hitherto unthought of, ways of seeking and offering help
- resources, models and their (community based) management
- the effect such models have for those who seek help and those who give it
- ways of implementing such models within community contexts.

As a participatory research project, it will involve a balanced mix of professional and lay people who have been directly engaged in the experience of seeking and giving help. It aims to include a wide range of experiences with regard to the different contexts in which people seek or offer help, including for example, income adequacy and security, maturation and ageing, surviving colonisation, migration, poverty, marginalisation and rehabilitation from criminality.

The project is funded by the Commonwealth Government under the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative. The ACT based Project Management Group for this initiative represents the Department of Justice and Community Safety, the Victims of Crime Coordinator and the Australian Catholic University. It will run until March 2001.

Further information

Robyn Holder: ACT Victims of Crime Co-ordinator
Ph: (02) 6257-8452 Robyn.Holder@act.gov.au

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES/SEMINARS

5th International Conference on Family Violence: Working Together to End Abuse

(formerly 'Children Exposed to Family Violence')

September 23-27, 2000 San Diego California

Contact: Conference Coordinator,
Family Violence and Sexual Assault Institute
Email: jmarciano@cspp.edu
Phone: (858) 623-2777 ext. 406
Website: http://www.fvsai.org/FVSAI_conference.htm

Stalking

December 7-8, 2000 Sydney

Australian Institute of Criminology

The conference will address the following topics: categories in explaining stalking; social expressions of stalking; legislative and criminal justice responses; relationship between stalking and domestic violence; future protection/prevention.

Contact: Conference Co-ordinators
Ph: (02) 6292 9000; Fax: (02) 6292 9002
Email: conference@netinfo.com.au
Website: <http://www.aic.gov.au/conferences/stalking/index.html>

Disability with Attitude: Critical Issues 20 Years after IYDP

February 16-17, 2001

The Social Relations of Disability Research Network, with People With Disabilities (NSW), Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)

This conference provides an opportunity for participants to engage in a critical audit of Australia's record on disability issues, and to do so within an international framework. Major themes to be addressed involve identity, gender, participation, representation, sexuality, violence and abuse, and the relationship between the disability movement and academic scholarship.

Contact: Ann McCutcheon,
Social Relations of Disability Research Network
Ph: (02) 9385 1870; Fax: +61 (2) 9662 8991
Email: McCutcheon@unsw.edu.au

INTERNET SITES

The following new publications are available on the Internet:

Domestic Violence and Children

The Future of Children Vol 9 No 3 1999

<http://www.futureofchildren.org/dvc/index.htm>

Entire journal issue on domestic violence and children by leaders in the field. Articles on: prevalence and effects; impact; impact of federal and state laws; the legal system's response; child protective services and domestic violence; community based services; response of the health care system; mental health services for children; prevention.

Young People and Domestic Violence: National Research on Young People's Attitudes and Experiences of Domestic Violence – Fact Sheet

National Crime Prevention

http://ncp.gov.au/ncp/division_3/html/over10.htm

Australian research conducted in 1999 which surveyed 5000 young people aged between 12 and 20 years of age, plus qualitative research with groups such as homeless youth and victims of domestic violence. Provides national baseline data about young people's understanding of, and attitudes to, domestic violence; their experiences of witnessing domestic violence; and their experience of violence in dating relationships. The Fact Sheet precedes publication of the full report in the near future.

Phone: National Crime Prevention (02) 6202 5736

Women, Men and Domestic Violence

Dale Bagshaw and Donna Chung, University of South Australia,

Partnerships Against Domestic Violence publication

http://www.dpmc.gov.au/osw/padv/contents/whats_new.html

Explains the methodological issues behind the differences in estimates of the prevalence and rates of domestic violence in various studies, explores the experiences of male and female victims and argues that the complex nature of domestic violence requires a multi-method approach which combines research

into the extent of violence with looking at its background, nature and other characteristics.

Free from DAS Distribution: Phone 02 62025736

Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls

A report from the United Nations Children's Fund Innocenti Research Centre

Innocenti Digest No 6 May 2000

<http://www.unicef.org/vaw/>

A comprehensive report which clearly identifies domestic violence as a violation of human rights. Topics covered include the nature and scope of the problem with statistical information from around the world; examples of violence against women throughout the life cycle; a discussion of the cultural, economic, legal and political causes; the consequences; the obligations of the state; and an integrated approach to intervention.

Intimate Partner Violence

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs

Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/ipv.htm>

Data from the U.S. National Crime Victimization Survey showing a fall of 21 per cent in violence against women partners between 1993 and 1998. The number of women murdered by intimate partners fell by 23 per cent from 1993 to 1997 and increased by 8 per cent from 1997 to 1998. Examines factors such as age, ethnicity, presence of children, injuries and reporting to the police. Useful to read in conjunction with the Bagshaw and Chung report.



Partnerships Against
Domestic Violence



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES

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

The Clearinghouse is linked to the Centre for Gender-Related Violence Studies, based in the University of New South Wales School of Social Work.

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth of Australia or the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* Taskforce.

Whilst all reasonable care has been taken in the preparation of this publication, no liability is assumed for any errors or omissions.

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