



SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND SAFETY

THE CASE FOR ONSITE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES AT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AGENCIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

According to a report by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year in the U.S. an estimated 1.5 million women are physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner and approximately 500,000 women are stalked by an intimate partner.¹ Domestic violence not only acts as a barrier to education, training, and employment but also can escalate when survivors seek or participate in such activities. Abusers also interfere with efforts of women on welfare to meet program requirements. Studies on the prevalence of domestic violence estimate that 22% of women in the general population have been abused as adults; however the figure is as high as 60% for women receiving welfare, with up to 30% of this group having been abused within the past year.² Furthermore, poverty and lack of adequate income often make it even more difficult for domestic violence survivors to escape from abuse.

At the national and state levels, domestic violence survivors and their advocates increasingly are focusing on issues of poverty and economic self-sufficiency. Building economic security for battered women was the topic of the October 2002 national meeting of state coalitions against domestic violence convened by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.³ However, most employment services agencies that assist women with finding and retaining employment have limited capacity to address issues of domestic violence and cannot readily attain it. With so many low-income women being mandated to participate in job readiness and placement programs, collaboration between job programs and domestic violence services agencies presents an outstanding opportunity not only to increase awareness about the ways that domestic violence acts as a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency but also to expand access to domestic violence services.

The Kraft Domestic Violence Services Project began in October 2000 and continued through the end of 2002 at sites in Chicago, Houston, and Seattle. This national demonstration project investigated how domestic violence acts as a barrier to women's training and employment and the interventions that are effective for assisting women to remain safe and employed. The Center

¹ Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, "Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence," National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 2000. Accessed at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf>

² For a discussion of data and findings from a wide range of studies on the prevalence of domestic violence, its forms, and effects on the lives of low income women see, "Surviving Violence and Poverty: A Focus on the Link Between Domestic and Sexual Violence, Women's Poverty and Welfare," NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, September 18, 2002, p. 1-2. Accessed at <http://www.nowldef.org/html/issues/wel/Surviving.pdf>.

³ For further discussion of this topic, see the following National Resource Center on Domestic Violence reports: Jill Davies, "Policy Blueprint on Domestic Violence and Poverty," March 2002; Katie M. Ciorba VonDeLinde, "How Are Domestic Violence Programs Meeting the Economic Needs of Battered Women in Iowa? An Assessment and Recommendations," March 2002; and Amy Correia and Katie M. Ciorba VonDeLinde, "Integrating Anti-Poverty Work into Domestic Violence Advocacy: Iowa's Experience," October 2002. Accessed at <http://www.vawnet.org/NRCSDVPublications/BCSDV/Papers/>.

for Impact Research (CIR) undertook the project's research component and provided technical assistance to the participating employment services agencies and domestic violence service providers. From its inception, this project was designed not only to provide direct services and build the capacity of participating agencies, but also document and share program and participant outcomes. Thus, the purposes of the project were twofold:

- To develop a collaborative model of providing domestic violence services within a job-training environment to expand access to domestic violence services for low-income victims.
- To develop a model for strengthening programs that help low-income women attain economic self-sufficiency by addressing needs of domestic violence survivors.

This report is intended to inform public policy debates about the need and benefits of offering domestic violence education and services onsite at employment services agencies. It highlights the challenges, service needs, and outcomes of low-income domestic violence survivors as they struggle to keep themselves and their children safe, become and remain employed, and attain self-sufficiency.

A second project report complements this policy report and is intended for social service practitioners.⁴ It summarizes the project learnings and best practice recommendations for integrating domestic violence services into programs and activities at employment services agencies. It discusses planning, establishing, and maintaining interagency collaborations; training of case managers; screening and referrals; and ongoing delivery of domestic violence services within the employment services setting.

During the two-year period of services:

- 1,845 people attended domestic violence educational presentations at the employment services agencies.
- 243 women completed the initial interview and received counseling services.
- 125 women completed the second interview three months after the initial interview.
- 47 women completed the third interview nine months after the initial interview.

⁴ Lise McKean, "Addressing Domestic Violence as a Barrier to Work: Building Collaborations between Domestic Violence Service Providers and Employment Services Agencies," Center for Impact Research, October 2004. Both reports are available at <http://www.impactresearch.org/publication/publicationdate.html>.

FINDINGS

- Nearly half of the respondents reported having been abused within the past six months; three-quarters reported having been abused in the past by previous partners.
- More than half of the respondents have been physically abused by their current partner. Of those reporting current physical abuse, three-quarters report severe physical aggression. Nearly three-quarters have been physically abused in the past by a past partner.
- Emotional abuse, controlling behavior, and intimidation within the last six months were reported by approximately one-half of the women currently experiencing abuse. Nearly three-quarters of women had experienced emotional abuse, controlling behavior, and intimidation in the past by past partners.
- Nearly one-quarter of respondents experiencing current abuse reported having been sexually abused by their current partner within the past six months. Over two-fifths of all respondents reported past sexual abuse by a past partner.
- Over one-quarter of respondents experiencing current abuse reported having been stalked by their current partner within the past six months. Over one-half of all respondents reported having been stalked in the past by a past partner.
- Nearly one-half of all respondents said that they feared for their own safety because of the abuser. Over one-third said that they feared for the safety of their children.

Domestic violence interferes with employment efforts in a myriad of ways; it can involve explicit acts of violence and sabotage or more subtle forms of psychological and emotional manipulation. The domestic violence counselors at the employment services agencies provided a range of services to participants, including counseling, crisis intervention, safety planning, support groups, legal and court advocacy, and referrals to other services. More than one-half of the participants needed services related to housing, financial assistance, food and/or clothing, education, mental health, and peer group support. Most participants were in need of multiple services. In their follow-up interviews with the domestic violence counselor three and nine months after the initial interview, participants reported improvements in all aspects of their domestic violence situation.

Of the 125 respondents for the three-month follow-up interview, three-quarters were either employed or enrolled in job training or an educational program. Of the 47 respondents for the next interview six months later, slightly more than three-quarters were employed. In both interview groups, less than one-quarter of the participants were neither employed nor enrolled in a training or educational program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The stakeholders in this Kraft project—domestic violence victims, employment services agencies, and domestic violence service providers—concurred that the project accomplished its goals of empowering individuals and service providers to address domestic violence as a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency. Coordinated advocacy by workforce development agencies, domestic violence service providers, and other groups representing women and low-wage workers must continue to inform public policy at the federal, state, and local levels about the role of domestic violence as a barrier to employment.

Advocacy efforts should also publicize effective models for addressing this barrier and call for public funding for programs that can deliver effective domestic violence services at employment services agencies. In the words of one employment services agency manager: “We feel a great loss over the end of the Kraft program. It is a model that clearly works. We have a higher placement and retention rate for domestic violence victims than before the program.”

The findings of the Kraft project highlight the crucial need for ongoing response to the fact that domestic violence harms individuals, families, and communities and acts as a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency. The following are specific recommendations for public policies and social services that can help to remove this barrier.⁵

The high prevalence of domestic violence among low-income women indicates the importance of effective domestic violence screening and referrals for applicants and recipients of TANF.

- Require that all TANF applicants are screened for domestic violence by a trained provider.
- Require that all TANF recipients are screened for domestic violence by a trained provider before proceeding with sanctions.
- Do not require victims of domestic violence to participate in marriage promotion programs if it would jeopardize their own and their children’s safety.
- Provide ongoing training for TANF caseworkers on domestic violence and procedures for screening and referrals.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires states to establish One-Stop centers where individuals can access a variety of job training and job placement services in one location. Because many employment services are already consolidated at these locations, One-

⁵ Suggestions to the recommendations were made by Rose Karasti of Chicago Jobs Council, Jody Raphael of DePaul University, and Kelly Ward of the Governor’s Office in Arizona. For a discussion of policy recommendations related to domestic violence and TANF reauthorization, see “Surviving Violence and Poverty: A Focus on the Link Between Domestic and Sexual Violence, Women’s Poverty and Welfare,” NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, September 18, 2002, p. 1-2. Accessed at <http://www.nowldef.org/html/issues/wel/Surviving.pdf>.

Stops are a practical venue for a replication of the Kraft program.⁶ Furthermore, with TANF caseworkers already located at selected One-Stops, TANF applicants and recipients would be able to access domestic violence services conveniently.

- Investigate opportunities for using the Governor's discretionary WIA funds to support domestic violence services at One-Stops.⁷
- Establish contacts with the Local Workforce Investment Board to determine if funding can be made available to support replication of the Kraft program.

The Family Violence Option protects the safety of TANF recipients and their children by granting temporary waivers from job search and work activity requirements for victims of domestic violence.

- Inform TANF applicants and recipients about the Family Violence Option during domestic violence screening.
- Provide counseling to help determine if the waiver is appropriate for the victim's situation.
- Advocate for the Family Violence Option in states where it has not been adopted.⁸

Lack of knowledge about services as well as lack of transportation and child care and the behavior of the abuser are barriers to accessing domestic violence services. A broad spectrum of agencies and programs serving low income women offer opportunities for conducting outreach for domestic violence services and for building and strengthening partnerships with domestic violence service providers.

- Place trained providers at employment services agencies, community colleges, and other sites of education and training programs.
- Incorporate into program contracts requirements that agencies screen new participants for domestic violence at intake, provide onsite domestic violence services, and screen participants who have irregular attendance records before expelling them from the program.
- Provide ongoing training in domestic violence and procedures for screening and referrals to staff at employment services agencies and other education and training programs.

⁶ The Kraft project's Houston site is a One-Stop operated by HoustonWorks USA.

⁷ As part of WIA, each Governor has authority over 15% of the state's annual WIA funding for discretionary expenditure for job training purposes, e.g., in 2003 this discretionary WIA funding amounted to \$8 million in Arizona.

⁸ For information about the Family Violence Option, see Legal Momentum (formerly NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund), "The Family Violence Option: Is Your State Taking Advantage of It?" Legal Momentum <http://www.legalmomentum.org/issues/wel/fvosur.shtml#overv>; and "Family Violence Option State by State Summary," http://www.legalmomentum.org/issues/wel/FVO_statebystate.pdf.