



# NATIONAL CENTER on Domestic and Sexual Violence

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## **Evaluation of OVW Faith-Based and Community Organizations Pilot Program**

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Remember back in 2005 when the Office on Violence Against Women in the U.S. Department of Justice (OVW) announced a \$4,000,000 Special Initiative out of the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Grant Program for Faith-Based and Community Organizations? Many were nervous and rumors abounded that this would undermine, rather than support, the advancement of the movement to end violence against women. In addition to funding local programs, the Initiative was designed around three intermediary organizations as the funding conduits as well as technical assistance providers to the local organizations. Those intermediaries were:

- A community based organization serving part of Idaho, Advocates Against Family Violence (AAFV), Caldwell, ID;
- A state coalition, the Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (WCADVSA), Laramie, WY; and
- The Faith and Community Technical Support Program (FACTS), a project created in response to the solicitation by Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion in Waco, TX, with a national scope, although applications were not accepted from the areas covered by the two other intermediaries above, the State of Wyoming and the southwestern portion of Idaho.

The National Institute of Justice contracted with Andrew Klein, PhD, of Advocates for Human Potential (<http://www.ahpnet.com>), and well known author and researcher as well as editor of the *National Bulletin on Domestic Violence Prevention*. His co-investigators were Mitchell Brown, PhD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Auburn University and Research Director of the Institute for Community Peace ([www.instituteforcommunitypeace.org](http://www.instituteforcommunitypeace.org)), and Mark Small PhD, Professor of Psychology with Clemson University's Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life (<http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/ifnl/index.html>). Brown developed evaluation tools to assess the extent to which grantees developed the capacity to successfully serve their diverse populations. Small focused on the role that faith played in the initiative and in the delivery of direct services.

Klein also invited the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence ([www.ncdsv.org](http://www.ncdsv.org)) and Dr. Rob Fischer, Associate Professor at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, (<http://www.cwru.edu>) to serve as consultants. Dr. Fisher is also co-director of the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development. Dr. Fisher had previously evaluated faith-based programming and developed the literature review and contributed to the research design. As a part of the evaluation, Christina Walsh, NCDSV Communications Director and Debby Tucker, NCDSV Executive Director, conducted in-depth assessments of a dozen of the local projects and participated in the analysis of the Initiative's process and impact.

In November 2008, we were very relieved to come to consensus that our worst fears had not been borne out in the actual implementation of the Initiative. Part of the concern was that the person initially selected by OVW to manage the Program had been hired only two weeks before the Program launched and did not come from the domestic violence community, but from the Republican National Committee. Furthermore, there were some immediate problems with the award of grant funds, with the Director of OVW retaining the decision-making authority and the intermediary organizations recruiting, reviewing and recommending. Again, most of those problems were worked through successfully and the three intermediaries were able to offer support and technical assistance to the 54 local projects participating.

Slightly more than 30% of the projects funded were faith-based organizations while most of the community based projects were local agencies that already provided domestic violence services as part of an array of services. AAFV held a second round of solicitations due to limited response, the due date would have required the grants to be written over the Christmas holidays, and ended up making eight awards. WCADVSA had seven and FACTS 39. The 54 sub-grantees were located in 24 states and all but two were rural. These exceptions, New Orleans and Boise, were made to serve victims nearby in rural parishes/counties.

Most of the projects, 85%, included various kinds of educational efforts including public education, professional education for social services and criminal justice, health care, school teachers and counselors and a third of the projects conducted training with the faith community. A dozen of the local programs served immigrant populations within their communities, most often Hispanic migrant farmers and workers. Several hired their first Spanish-speaking staff members. Fifty-one of the projects provided direct victim services as their only or primary activity.

Some of the participating projects were: the Wyoming Association of Churches in partnership with the WCADVSA and its member agencies in five communities held trainings targeting clergy, lay persons and service providers. All five trainings followed a mutually agreed upon curriculum and were presented by a Catholic priest who is affiliated with a hospital and had served on the Governor's Commission on Family Violence. While fewer clergy attended than they had hoped, the lay people were able to take back the information and later it was possible to see that the training resulted in more referrals and cooperation between local churches and shelter programs.

The Southwest Arkansas Crisis Center in DeQueen, AR, expanded their services to five additional counties, offering crisis counseling and shelter services, assistance with obtaining protective orders, and extensive public education and awareness. They strengthened relationships with churches, law enforcement, the State's Health and Human Services personnel, attorneys and many more who could be a source of support for victims. The Chief of Police and Sheriff helped to add credibility to the outreach efforts in the surrounding rural areas with law enforcement and other criminal justice professionals. And the Chief and Sheriff assured those victims who were illegally in the U.S. that their safety and well being was of paramount concern and no reports would be made to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Direct services soared as did volunteer recruitment and support for their work.

Similarly, ROSE Advocates in Weiser, ID, expanded their services to three adjacent counties with an emphasis on providing bilingual and advocacy services. While ROSE self-identified as faith-based, the Director also served on the Board of the Idaho Coalition and called themselves community-based as well, which made their agency an excellent example of what Dr. Small defined in the evaluation as "faith-infused".

Review the full evaluation and recommendations at [http://www.ncdsv.org/publications\\_vawagrant.html](http://www.ncdsv.org/publications_vawagrant.html). Being involved in the evaluation and seeing the exciting progress, albeit with very short-term funding, was gratifying. We have continued to be in touch with some of the local projects and are pleased many have been able to secure new funding through state or local sources.

As for the intermediaries, Goldilocks comes to mind. The largest with a national reach, FACTS at Baylor University did some exciting things in providing technical assistance to their local projects and involved two very well-respected professors; Dr. Byron Johnson and Dr. Neil Websdale, however once the funding ended so did their project. The smaller model in Caldwell, ID, [www.hopesdoor.org](http://www.hopesdoor.org) had some difficulties along the way with what some considered conflicts of interest with the intermediary competing for funding from this and other sources.

And the **just-right** model turned out to be that of the Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault ([www.wyomingdvsa.org](http://www.wyomingdvsa.org)), which retained the staff member who had worked most closely with the local projects, have continued to offer training and technical assistance and have incorporated fostering cooperation, coordination and collaboration among faith and domestic violence agencies into the ongoing work of their Coalition.