National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, University of Connecticut School of Social Work Unveil New Report

Local Domestic Violence Programs Address Comprehensive Needs of Survivors

“I learned how much I’m worth and my rights as a person and a woman,” said one domestic violence survivor in Illinois. “I have a better life together with my kids, and we live in peace and harmony.”

Harrisburg, Penn. – The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV) and the University of Connecticut today released a new, multi-state study that documents that local domestic violence programs are meeting the needs of survivors. Meeting Survivors’ Needs through Non-Residential Domestic Violence Services & Supports: Results of a Multi-State Study was conducted by Dr. Eleanor Lyon and Dr. Jill Bradshaw of the University of Connecticut School of Social Work and Anne Menard of NRCDV with joint support from the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“We are encouraged to find that local domestic violence programs are meeting the needs of the vast majority of those who seek their services,” said Menard. “This report affirms that local programs are having an important, positive impact but also that they need further support to respond more fully to what victims are looking for when they reach out for help.”

More than three out of four of the nearly 1,500 domestic violence survivors who used support groups, counseling, supportive services and legal advocacy found these services to be “very helpful.” The vast majority of other survivors using these services found them to be “helpful.”

After seeking and receiving help, 95 percent of survivors were more knowledgeable about planning for their safety and more hopeful about the future. The study also found the state of the economy continues to have a negative effect on survivors. About 45 percent of the survivors reported experiencing financial difficulties, including many not being able to pay their bills.
“A struggling economy does not create domestic violence but clearly can exacerbate the severity and frequency of abuse, thereby increasing the demand for services at the local level,” said Lyon. “While domestic violence programs are often themselves facing financial hardship, they are clearly creating positive changes in the lives of survivors and their children.”

The researchers collaborated with programs across 4 states – Alabama, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Washington – and with 4 culturally-specific national organizations and their associated programs across the nation. These included the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, Casa de Esperanza, the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, and the Women of Color Network. A total of 90 domestic violence programs participated and distributed the study survey to survivors who had two or more contacts with them over a 9-month period from April to December 2010.

A copy of the Study Executive Summary, Full Report, Fact Sheet and other materials can be found on VAWnet.org, the NRCDV’s online resource center, at www.vawnet.org/research/MeetingSurvivorsNeeds.

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