

# NEWS 8 Austin (Texas)

March 15, 2004

## Outreach Program Targets the Deaf

By Jitin Hingorani

More than a half-million deaf women in the United States are abused. Until five years ago, victims didn't even have a way to call for help.

One agency is increasing its outreach to help America's largest disabled group.

An average call at National Domestic Violence Hotline (<http://www.ndvh.org/>) lasts 10 to 15 minutes – enough time to provide abused women with options. But when a deaf victim calls, the crisis intervention can go on for hours.

“I don't get a two-minute call, I don't get a three-minute call, so there's a lot of talking, a lot of communicating that helps get those things out that you can't clearly put out through tone of voice,” deaf outreach coordinator Warren Grannis said.

Grannis senses the urgency through a TTY, or teletypewriter. He said abuse in the deaf community is more than just physical.

“It's not allowing them to use close-captioning on the TV, there are two-way pagers, there's TTY, there's Internet access, taking away their hearing aids,” Grannis said.

The hearing impaired make up 8.6 percent of America's population. A staggering statistic, if you consider most domestic violence programs have limited services for deaf victims.

“Most of them are not ready and able to provide services to deaf individuals with interpreters and TTYs. Staff -- maybe one person or few people who know how to sign,” Mary Wambach, executive director of Deaf Abused Women and Children Advocacy Services (DAWCAS), said.

DAWCAS provides one-on-one counseling for victims. It applauds the hotline's efforts to train more staff familiar with deaf issues.

“The victim feels more of a connection, almost like if they were sitting down with that person who was on the other end of that TTY, someone who empathizes with them and I also think that will result in more referrals for us,” Wambach said.

The hotline's goal is to route large volumes of TTY calls to national deaf advocacy services and publicize its TTY number.

“It's extremely difficult for the National Domestic Violence Hotline to get our number out in general and then even when we are picked up by the media, they often only run the number for hearing victims and don't run the TTY number,” Kathy Miller, with the National Domestic Hotline, said.

Increased outreach and ad campaigns begin next month. Additional resources to answer every call for help even if it lasts for hours.

If you or anyone you know is in an abusive relationship and needs help, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-7233 and the TTY number is (800) 787-3224. You can also e-mail them. (8889158159@airmessage.net)