

Regional Domestic Violence Leaders' Summit Notes

November 30, 2010

BACKGROUND:

In fall 2009, a shocking wave of domestic violence related deaths in the region reminded us all of the tragic outcomes that can occur as a result of violence at home. Many of us asked at the time: what could have been done to prevent this? National research suggests that our best opportunity for change is to assess how we address domestic violence as a community, and then identify how to improve our prevention and response systems.

Over the summer of 2010, United Way of the Columbia-Willamette held a series of county-level inventory meetings to create a system map of existing domestic violence (DV) prevention, intervention, and coordination programs, and to identify critical needs and gaps in this system.

On November 30, 2010, regional leaders from Clark, Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties convened to examine the results of the inventory, review the gaps that exist, and develop regional strategies to strengthen our collective response to domestic violence. These notes reflect the presentations and input received at the Summit.

INTRODUCTION:

Marc R. Levy, President/CEO, United Way

Domestic violence is like domestic terrorism. We should respond appropriately. It is shocking that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men will experience domestic violence in their lifetimes. In our assessment of existing services, we wanted to look at what services are unique to each county, as well as what is common to all. We learned that a good amount of services exist, but that the system is underfunded to meet the level of need.

We want to come away from this Summit being more strategic and intentional, with a strategy to get everyone in the community to recognize domestic violence as a problem. We hope to shed a light on some of the conversations that have come out of the county assessments, prioritize the strategies we could move forward with, and come out with a commitment. Let's make this a movement that can create real change.

Marc then introduced Dr. Sujata Warriar, director of NYC Office of Prevention of Domestic Violence, who brings her passion, experience and knowledge to us today.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

Dr. Sujata Warriar

Working in Domestic Violence is not "lone-ranger" work; we all have to work together. Some of the most controversial issues regarding domestic violence are:

- ✓ Interaction between holding offenders accountable and working with the power structures

- ✓ Confidentiality
- ✓ Definition of DV
- ✓ Engaging the community
- ✓ Gender issues
- ✓ Socioeconomic
- ✓ Culture of misogyny
- ✓ Lack of funding
- ✓ Blaming the victims
- ✓ Lack of services across the board for marginalized, undocumented people
- ✓ Workplace issues, what it costs workplaces
- ✓ Child custody
- ✓ Over-reliance on criminal justice system to solve things
- ✓ Micro vs. macro—social change vs. helping individual victims
- ✓ Lack of attention to sexual violence issues
- ✓ “High conflict” vs. domestic violence
- ✓ False allegations/recantation
- ✓ Victim autonomy
- ✓ Batterer intervention programs
- ✓ Impact on children
- ✓ Stalking
- ✓ Credibility

The context of the domestic violence situation is critical:

- ✓ Failing to distinguish one kind of domestic abuser from another can harm victims.
- ✓ What is offender’s INTENT?
- ✓ What is the MEANING of violence to the victim?
- ✓ EFFECT of act on the victim? (Lethality and RISK of further violence; risk of other, nonviolent ABUSE or intimidation of the victim)
- ✓ Not just risk that is directed immediately by the offender
- ✓ Who is doing what to whom and with what impact?
- ✓ Not meant to excuse criminal behavior

The first system we worked with was criminal the justice system; we can focus too much on the surface level, which can treat the victim as an offender if they try to defend themselves.

- ✓ Battering is patterned use of violence
- ✓ Resistive is trying to defend themselves
- ✓ Other (situational/pathological): violence not linked to establishing an ongoing relationship of dominance.

It is challenging to distinguish between battering and situational. At the heart of battering is coercion, power, control. Sometimes physical violence actually decreases as batterer needs only their looks and words to control the victim. Battering often comes from a place of entitlement; this is why historically male-on-female violence is more common. We are still socialized this way today in the U.S., even if it is less obvious.

Victims are not saints. They try to assert themselves as well. What is important is the context of who ultimately has control in the relationship- long-term.

Violence has a negative effect on the physical health of victim and of children due to long-term high stress. Constant fear and uncertainty have negative effect on brain development in small children. A person's capacity to think before reacting deteriorates over time.

What is the long-term impact on society? Gender socialization happens very young. Right now we focus on responding to the victim, changing the offender and changing the system. Changing the offender and system is our responsibility, not the responsibility of the victim.

Core principles of intervention:

- ✓ Look at context
- ✓ Avoid responses that further endanger victims
- ✓ Do people feel comfortable in seeking services?
- ✓ Look at cultural situation
- ✓ Link with others
- ✓ Involve survivors in changing systems/services
- ✓ Account for the needs of children

PANEL #1: Coordinated Community Response

Washington State Representative Jim Moeller moderated this panel.

Captain Donna Henderson: DVERT focuses on high-risk DV situations to increase safety and well-being of victims. This includes law-enforcement and community advocates, plus community partners- high lethality/high risk cases. Survivor chooses to participate. Referred cases are screened twice-weekly by sergeant who contacts victim to see if he/she wants to participate. It is a team approach to communicate without barriers. Includes court accompaniment, police follow-up, etc. to ensure victim safety. They also meet regularly to discuss systems change.

LaDonna Burgess: There are 11 law-enforcement agencies in Washington County, plus a Victim Advocacy Center at courthouse. Legal advocates can accompany victims to court. Washington County Sheriff, and Beaverton and Hillsboro Police Departments provide reports to legal advocates. Domestic Violence Resource Center (DVRC) reviews these reports regularly and calls the victim to offer resources. When started two years ago, about 2 victims a month accepted services; now about 11 people per month accept services.

Sgt. Mike Davis: The Domestic Violence Prosecution Center is 10 years old, and consists of collaboration between Clark County and Vancouver; it includes legal, law enforcement, and victim advocate staff. We file over 3,000 cases per year. Our prosecuting attorneys are "cross-deputized" to prosecute both misdemeanors and felonies. We can use victim statements as evidence to uncover additional crimes and to illuminate context. Community partnerships were put together by a grant, including City of Vancouver Corrections Department and YWCA. We give 24-hour response (access to DV detectives).

Martha Strawn Morris: The new Gateway Center is 3 months old and is collaboration between City of Portland, Multnomah County and community partners. Hours are M-F, 9-5. It is not shelter for overnight, but a walk-in/drop-in center. Navigators are community-based and contract with 6 different agencies. They provide brief, face-to-face and compassionate interviews (2-2.5 hours), and work with survivors to identify their own priorities and services available in building and in community. Legal Aid OR, LifeWorks NW, Department of Human Services, District Attorney's Office, DVERT, Sexual Assault Resource Center, Volunteers of America Home Free, WorkSource, and Relief Nursery are all available in the building.

Chiquita Rollins: The idea of a coordinated community response was first talked about in the 1980s. Multnomah County DV Coordinator program is one of the oldest in the country. No one agency can solve this problem. We shouldn't make things more difficult for victim. A range of interventions should be present in the community. We need to develop relationships across the spectrum of services, improve services and access to services and work on solving problems and supporting each other.

PANEL #2: Best Practices

Rut Martinez of Uniting to Understand Racism moderated this panel.

Melissa Erlbaum: The Rural Outreach program at Clackamas Women's Services addresses intergenerational violence and engages community. We spent first year getting to know community as volunteers at faith-based organizations, schools and community centers. Physical presence is important. We've worked with schools a lot, as well as cross-agency services. Information can spread from schools, to children, to parents who then seek services.

John Richmond: Safe Start focuses on child safety. One goal is to include successful intervention to both adult and child survivors of domestic violence. Children should be safe, supported, and reunited with non-offending parents. Oregon has VERY high rate of placement in foster care. We need to recognize and embed in practice that non-abusive parents are in best position to care for their children and help them heal. It's best to build relationships between DV programs and Child Protective Services.

Kris Billhardt: VOA Home Free housing services has 7 advocates who work with survivor households to find and sustain permanent housing. We offer funding to help them find housing, and are building connections to housing agencies and landlords. 90% of survivors are still safe and housed 1 year after receiving services.

Melissa Erlbaum: Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) has a housing partnership with NW Housing Alternatives. This is a housing first model in Clackamas County and has the capacity to serve 100 households. (Launched by grant from United Way!)

Tawna Sanchez: NAYA began a DV program in 2000, responding to RFP from Multnomah County about culturally specific services. Some cultures have a norm that you don't leave your family- you try to fix problems. The current DV system wasn't set up for non-white, non-male, non-wealthy people. We seek social justice for everyone. We are not *just* a DV program; all kinds of things are needed to make a family work. It all started as a youth program for Native

American young people. It's all connected. For example educational success is affected by family situation.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: County Assessments

Sarah McDowell

Assessment of data and United Way's Domestic Violence Assessment for each county showed:

- ✓ At least 85,000 women in our area are currently experiencing physical domestic violence.
- ✓ Challenge was determining who to list in fatality section. At least 31 fatalities occurred November 2009-October 2010.
- ✓ Service happens at many different levels. We have to look at the system as a whole. Each county has similar types of services, but some have more or less of each (and all types of services are underfunded).
- ✓ In 2009, over 21,000 callers had to be turned away from DV shelters due to lack of capacity. The answer is not in emergency shelter alone, however. People can't leave the shelter until they have transitional housing and other services. The whole system needs to be strong.
- ✓ Prevention services are vital. Generally there is no funding for prevention services, and agencies do what they can with their time and funding for other work.
- ✓ Biggest problem is *lack of funding*. EVERY part of the existing system is grossly underfunded.

12 areas emerged as priorities across the region:

1. Shelter and housing – including transitional and affordable housing
2. Advocacy - victim advocates in multiple settings
3. Legal Services
4. Prevention, education and outreach
5. DV policy and system coordination
6. Parenting support
7. Counseling
8. Financial support
9. Safety
10. Service for diverse populations
11. Batterer's services
12. Criminal Justice

These priorities are not surprising, but they are unacceptable. We shouldn't have to tell survivors "no." (For more information, please see the Inventory Summary at the United Way website (<http://www.unitedway-pdx.org/domesticviolence>).

Questions and answers:

Does United Way have a role to play in the public messaging of this issue? Yes. But we can't do

it alone.

How did you gather information for this report? The Planning Group and Family Violence Coordinating Councils helped hold an assessment meeting for each county.

Why isn't business community listed in "12 areas"? Those 12 areas are gaps; the business community is definitely included under strategies to combat that.

I'm distressed by report's definition of sexual violence- it's too narrow and doesn't convey the seriousness. This is something to continue to discuss. Unfortunately we couldn't include everything we wished. We'd be glad to amend that in the final report.

We need to move from crisis response to more prevention and other services.

TABLE DISCUSSION

What are the most critical needs we should address as a region?

From today's presentation and your own experience, what are the 3 most critical needs we should address as a region? Participants ranked their top three choices from gaps identified in the inventory; the following are the results from the discussion (note that there are ties):

- 1. Shelter & Housing**
- 2. Prevention, Education & Outreach**
- 3. Legal Services**
- 3. DV Policy & System Coordination**
- 4. Services to Diverse Populations**
- 4. Advocacy**

Comments on Priorities:

- ✓ Shelter and housing are two different categories.
- ✓ There is a large unmet need for housing for people who are ready to leave a shelter.
- ✓ Survivor-centered policy and system coordination is a need.
- ✓ We need to start prevention education at elementary school level for both boys and girls.

PANEL #3: Mobilizing our Community

Vanessa Timmons of the Multnomah County Domestic Violence Coordinators Office moderated this panel

Jennifer Talbot: In Listen to Kids, we've learned we need to start prevention early. Providing information to kids does help. They are not too young to absorb this information and do something about it.

Teri Lorenzen: Teen Education and Empowerment Network includes advocates from throughout area who work with young people. We coordinate our presentations on helping teens understand warning signs of abusive relationships.

Hon. Don Letourneau: The #1 need in Washington County is for supervised parenting. A new grant will help provide that in the Tri-County Metro area.

Laura Ritchie: The Rose City Justice Jammers meet monthly to share problems and solutions in the criminal justice arena. Domestic violence doesn't stop at county/state lines, thus we need to collaborate. Have quarterly regional domestic violence meetings. Portland Police have developed Family Abuse Supplemental Report which is used throughout the area by Law Enforcement.

Chair Lynn Peterson: When we looked at what we do about DV in Clackamas County, none of it is mandated except for the criminal system; therefore none if it has stable funding. All money comes out of general fund. We fund nonprofit shelters such as Clackamas Women's Services, advocate for accessibility and have an educational campaign about domestic violence (by elected officials who've signed on to DV awareness). We facilitate and look at how to narrow the gap when there is a gap. We mandate training within our own workforce. There should be a political action committee covering 4 counties around domestic violence.

Debbie Medeiros: At Pathways to Healing, we feel outreach and education are an important part of prevention (e.g. our Facebook page). We developed a core group of youth to get input—what do they want to learn? What do they think will be helpful? Families start orientation together, and then split into youth and adult groups. Thus, families are learning tools at the same time so they can stand up together. We provide training to mainstream community organizations to help them better serve Native people.

Evelina Kurilenko: Russian Oregon Social Services started in 1994 to meet needs of Russian speaking community. Two groups: Russian Evangelical who came as refugees. Second group came on marriage or work visas. Outreach and education to Russian speaking community. A main focus is DV and sexual assault. Provide case management of up to two years, help to attain immigration status.

Gabby Santos: Prevention is a good way to mobilize communities that are historically oppressed. Communities of Color task force meets every 6 weeks about addressing systems change and overall cultural violence. We're all affected by oppression. There are interconnections, as well as diversity WITHIN communities. It's hard enough to leave a violent relationship without also dealing with a racist system. Why does our culture think it's okay to hurt someone because they don't fit a gender binary? "It will get better" isn't enough, we need to say "it stops now."

GROUP EXERCISE: Strategies for Action

Members divided into groups by topic to discuss:

- ✓ How can we reduce domestic violence and improve our response?
- ✓ What is the one best strategy we could implement right now to reduce the prevalence and effects of domestic violence?

(Strategies have been organized in priority order; please note that some are ties.)

1. **Shelter/Housing:** Look at a full spectrum of housing options and how these options work together. Plan for both short term and long term housing with a survivor, and keep one advocate throughout the process.
2. **Prevention, Education & Outreach (1st group):** Create a Social Messaging and Public Awareness Campaign, including a strong anti-violence message from men to men, and framing the same message appropriately for women and for kids. Work toward consistent messaging across the DV spectrum.
Prevention (2nd group): Support prevention education in schools through training health teachers. Incorporate DV prevention into the education system, support teachers and build relationships with the school districts. Research and build message to integrate into regular school curricula.
3. **Financial Support:** Utilize volunteers in fundraising and create a consortium of regional private funders to increase funding available for DV services. Explore new ways to advocate for funding. (tie)
3. **Services for Diverse Populations:** Design a strategy and policy approach to ensure that people of color are at the table on DV initiatives from the beginning. Look at barriers for unique populations; recognize that equality does not equal equity; allocate resources accordingly. (tie)
5. **Legal Services:** Expand Capacity of Legal Aid in representation for restraining orders. Regionalize and expand the Multnomah County Legal Aid's model to Clackamas, Washington and Clark counties.
6. **Advocacy:** Create a Regional Advocates' Forum to raise the visibility and professionalism of the role of DV advocates. Offer mutual peer support, education, identification of gaps and needs, sharing resources, and improving the hand-off between agencies. Include every county, every sector, and culturally specific advocates. (tie)
6. **DV Policy & System Coordination:** Improve training on consistent procedures for public safety workers, e.g. 911 operators. Collect consistent data on DV numbers. (tie)
6. **Counseling:** Create a whole family mental health treatment and support model for families involved with DV. Integrated treatment teams for each county would use trauma-informed practice, and collaborate to share training and consultation resources. (tie)
7. **Safety:** Create specific Crisis Volunteer Advocates to respond to DV situations, such as the scene of an incident or a safe location with law enforcement. Provide immediate response in the crisis, safety planning and follow-up; assist in coordinating protective orders and resources.
8. **Parenting Support:** Cross-train homeless liaisons in public schools on working directly with DV affected kids and developing safe strategies to engage victims.
9. **Batterer's Services:** Develop more material for men/women who are abusive to be used in variety of settings. Use non-shaming outreach interventions.
10. **Criminal Justice:** Improve relations across jurisdictions and increase collaboration.

Note: Two groups wrote in “Long term services” or “Long term support” in comments area—a theme that echoed through the workgroups of access to ongoing services.

NEXT STEPS

Howard Klink, Vice President for Community Mobilization & Investment, United Way

United Way will convene a four-county Steering Committee early in 2011 to analyze the information provided today, develop a road map for moving forward and oversee progress on key recommendations. We endorse the recommendation to remove cultural barriers, and will see that cultural representation is present in all groups.

More information will be coming out in the months ahead. We expect notes from the meeting to be available in January.

We thank everyone for their work to make today possible, and your commitments to help change the course of domestic violence in our region.