

PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 18, 2009

Contact: Kelly Starr
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
206-389-2515, ext. 210
kelly@wscadv.org

Domestic Violence Survivors Report That Services Save Lives

Advocates Urge Lawmakers to Preserve Resources to Meet Demand for Services

A groundbreaking national study of domestic violence shelters was released by the University of Connecticut today. The study, *Meeting Survivors' Needs: A Multi-State Study of Domestic Violence Shelter Experiences*, captured the experiences of 3,410 shelter residents in 215 programs across 8 states, including Washington. It revealed the positive impact of shelters on survivors' lives.

Survivors accessing Washington programs reported that their shelter experience increased their access to safety (90%), their knowledge of options and choices (92%) as well as community resources (87%). Importantly, these particular changes have been associated with longer-term improved safety and well-being in experimental, longitudinal studies of domestic violence victims. Survivors who had children with them at the shelter also reported that they received help with their children's safety (98%) and that their children felt more supported (90%) as a result of staying at the shelter.

According to the lead researcher, Eleanor Lyon, "This study shows that shelters are able to address the urgent and compelling needs of those experiencing domestic violence, and to assist diverse survivors with diverse needs. Without the shelter, most say they would have stayed with an abuser, become homeless, lost everything or risked death."

Unfortunately, many victims who need services are unable to find help. In a single day in 2008, according to the newly released National Domestic Violence Census, Washington domestic violence programs served over 1,493 adults and children. Nationwide, the number of victims served was more than 60,000. However, a significant number of

requests--more than 267 in Washington and 8,900 across the country--went unmet due to a lack of resources.

The economic downturn has widened the gap between the demand for and the delivery of services. In harsh economic times, more and more victims come forward for services because they themselves have fewer resources. Together, these factors create a dangerous environment in which victims in crisis cannot find safety.

“Domestic violence shelters are vital, often life-saving resources that serve a critical need in this state,” said Nan Stoops, executive director of the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “During these difficult economic times, when shelters are struggling to serve a population in great need, maintaining state and federal funding for these services becomes even more essential.”

Advocates across the country are urging Congress to reauthorize and fully fund the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA). FVPSA is the only dedicated federal funding source for domestic violence shelters and programs, but it expired in September 2008.

The complete research report, *Meeting Survivors' Needs: A Multi-State Study of Domestic Violence Shelter Experiences*, is available online at www.vawnet.org.

About the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Founded in 1990 by survivors of domestic violence and their allies, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a non-profit network of over 65 domestic violence advocacy programs across the state of Washington. Our work includes research, training, promoting domestic violence awareness, and public policy advocacy. To learn more, please visit our website at www.wscadv.org.

###