Domestic Violence in the Lafayette Community: Problems Addressed, Suggestions Offered

A Policy Brief

Domestic Violence negatively impacts nearly every aspect of our community, from the costs incurred by our institutions such as the courts, police, schools, and community service organizations, to the neighborhoods where victims live, as do the friends and relatives of those directly involved. Purdue’s Women’s Studies Research and Policy Center (WSRPC) explored the question: What role might Purdue University play in furthering prevention and intervention in local cases of domestic violence? The WSRPC directed a group of undergraduate Women’s Studies students as they explored the issue of domestic violence in the community and attempted to uncover unmet needs and issues where Purdue might play a role. After researching the problem and consulting various agencies and individuals directly involved with domestic violence prevention and intervention, the WSRPC recommends the following actions: 1. Create a Women’s Studies course as an internship for students interested in mentoring children of domestic violence who are enrolled in the “Fresh Start” program under the Weed and Seed initiative. 2. Explore a partnership between Purdue’s Psychological Counseling Clinic and the YWCA domestic violence shelter.

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Scope of the Problem:
In the United States it is estimated that one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime, and that about 1.3 million women experience domestic violence each year. In 2006, a survey showed that 232,960 women were raped or sexually assaulted, and in 2005, some 1,181 women were murdered by an intimate partner. Women under 20 are at the highest risk for rape, and women aged 20-24 are at the highest risk for domestic violence. Other risk factors include having a low income, or being African-American or Native American.
Domestic violence also affects children. Between thirty and sixty percent of intimate partner abusers abuse children in the household. Children from violent families often develop post traumatic stress disorder and boy children are more likely to grow up to be abusers while girl children are more likely to grow up to be victims of abuse. While perpetrators are more likely to abuse children, victims are more likely to neglect them.

The National Network to End Domestic Violence published a report of the 2009 National Census of Domestic Violence Services which includes a state-by-state breakdown. As of September 15, 2009, domestic violence programs in Indiana served 1,795 victims, of which 1,609 were seeking refuge in shelters or transitional housing. On that same day, 69 women were turned away because the programs did not have the resources to help them. Domestic violence programs in Indiana reported not being able to help women because of lack of staff and inadequate funding.

The Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence publishes yearly statistics on domestic violence in the state. From July 2008 through June 2009 they found that 4,461 women and 3,895 children were served in emergency shelters while 2,895 victims were denied shelter. Fifty one deaths occurred as a result of domestic violence and 101,679 calls were made to crisis lines. The majority of perpetrators consisted of boyfriends (42.5%) and spouses (27.5%). The most affected age groups were 25-35 (35.8%), 36-46 (23.7%), and 18-24 (20.6%).

The Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence found that the lower the income of the victim, the higher the chance for the occurrence of domestic violence. Locally, more than half (55%) of students in the Lafayette School Corporation come from families whose incomes are low enough to qualify for free or reduced lunches.

In 2008, the local YWCA sheltered 287 women and 250 children. They also handled 4,576 crisis calls and filed 351 protective orders. The West Lafayette Police reported 63 domestic disturbance calls, 13 sexual offense calls, 11 domestic battery arrests and 3 sexual battery arrests.

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2 http://www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html
3 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
10 http://www.ywca.org/site/pp.asp?c=brJKUNLG&b=4282115
The Lafayette Police reported 309 assault and battery arrests (not specifically domestic or sexual), 10 offenses against family and child arrests, 1 rape arrest, and 23 sex offense arrests.\(^{11}\)

**Women’s Studies Research and Policy Center’s (WSRPC) interest in the issue:**
Domestic Violence is an issue that every community faces. It has the potential to destroy not only an individual’s life but also entire families. It disrupts the lives of children and, in turn, the school system. It overloads the courts and social service case workers. Finally, it overburdens the shelter system and other community service organizations. Domestic violence has a negative effect on the entire community. While men are also victims of domestic violence, women and children are the primary targets. Because of this, Women's Studies programs and Feminist groups are dedicated to advancing awareness, prevention, and effective aid for victims of domestic violence not only in this country, but throughout the world. Through the Community Outreach class that produced this policy brief, we hope to provide feedback and ideas to help advance the efforts of domestic violence programs in our own community.

**Pre-existing Policies and Programs:**

**Lafayette YWCA’s Domestic Violence Intervention and Prevention Program and Domestic Violence Shelter:**
The YWCA offers a wide range of support for victims of domestic violence in our community. The Domestic Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (DVIPP) is designed to support women and children in need who experience domestic violence. The YWCA offers a safe, confidential shelter for domestic violence victims, a place for women and children to stay when they are trying to get away from their abuser. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.\(^{12}\) However, the shelter is only the first step in a long road to independence as stays are limited to 30 days. Pulling one’s life together after experiencing repeated emotional and physical violence takes much longer. While at the shelter, DVIPP provides support classes, including a parenting program, an anger management course, and programs dealing with family counseling. DVIPP has outreach educational programs designed specifically for teens, children, schools and community groups. It also aids parents in finding jobs, homes, financial resources, and childcare to promote self-sustainability.\(^{13}\)

**Fresh Start:**\(^{14}\)
Fresh Start is a new supportive housing program funded by the City of Lafayette’s HOME program in partnership with the City’s Weed and Seed crime reduction strategy. It is designed to step in when the shelter system ends after a family has spent its 30 days in shelter. Only mothers with children living with them qualify for the program. Fresh Start provides temporary housing up to a maximum of 12 months. It focuses on job placement assistance and group counseling in conjunction with the DVIPP. Services are primarily provided through the YWCA and other partnerships with agencies around the county. Program participants are referred to Fresh Start through the YWCA Domestic Violence Shelter.

\(^{11}\)http://www.tippecanoenog.gov/prosecutor/division.asp?fDD=19-288

\(^{12}\)http://www.ywca.org/site/apps/lk/content2.aspx?c=brJKUNLG&b=5456925

\(^{13}\)Ibid.

\(^{14}\)Information on Fresh Start compiled through interviews with Adam Murphy, Site coordinator for City of Lafayette Weed & Seed Neighborhood Revitalization Grant, and from attending Fresh Start meetings.
Fresh Start was established to provide much more than temporary housing for its clients. It attempts a more holistic approach in order to help victims of domestic violence recover and maintain “normal” lives. The program is specifically directed towards families, meaning that participants must have children.

Mothers attend “Choices”, which is a 16 week anger management module. It is followed by “Reflections”, which provides a group support program for parents. Women and their children are taught budgeting skills to help them gain independence. This program benefits both the mother and the child through weekly case worker visits by a member of the Fresh Start program. The case worker works very closely with the mother to ensure that she is moving forward with her goals - finding a job, further support in the community and living within her budget.

Local Schools and Domestic Violence Prevention/Education:
Three public school systems serve the local area: Tippecanoe County Schools, Lafayette Schools, and West Lafayette Schools. We found that each system addresses the problem of domestic violence differently. After contacting the three school systems we received the following information.

Tippecanoe County Schools rely on their counseling system. They reported that they have counselors available to talk to students whenever necessary concerning domestic violence or any other issue.

Lafayette School System reported that all education or awareness programs are decided by the individual schools. At Jefferson High School there are no mandatory classes that specifically discuss domestic violence or infer that early intervention programs are necessary. However, there is a mandatory health education class which includes a section on violent relationships. There is also an elective Family and Consumer Sciences course that covers parenting and child development, including violent relationships. The school also has information posted in the hallways which include hotline numbers, including WETIP (an anonymous place to report crimes/concerns).

West Lafayette school system provides no systematic education covering domestic violence for middle and high school students. The education presented to students is solely based on the amount of time a teacher is willing to devote to the problem and the teacher is forced to replace precious curriculum hours with preventative education. (Note: this will change when a new Indiana Law on teaching domestic violence in the schools takes effect in the coming years).

Policy Options:
Upon completing our investigation over the semester, the team decided to explore the following three options:
1. Create an Internship for students interested in mentoring children in Fresh Start.
2. Partner Purdue’s Psychological Counseling Clinic with YWCA Shelter and Fresh Start participants.
3. Partner DVIPP with School Systems to create education programs in domestic violence prevention.
Advantages and disadvantages of each policy option:

1. Create an Internship for students interested in mentoring children in Fresh Start.

Advantages: Children of domestic violence require special attention to cope with and recover from exposure to domestic violence. A gap we see in the Fresh Start program is the need for a supportive role model to interact with children. This problem could be initially solved with a partnership between Purdue Women’s Studies Program and Fresh Start by creating a special class for students to volunteer to intern as child mentors. This partnership has many advantages for all involved. Purdue students would engage in a valuable experience and be able to receive college credit while participating in the internship. Fresh Start would benefit from this partnership because with student mentors the case worker would be able to provide more focused attention on the mothers in the program. Most importantly the children will benefit from having a mentor, someone they can trust and look up to, someone they can talk to, have fun with, and most importantly, someone they can feel safe with.

Disadvantages: One disadvantage to this partnership is the fact that students usually intern for one semester (5 months) which is substantially less than the total time participants are eligible to participate in the program. In an ideal situation, a mentorship would last for the duration of the family's participation in Fresh Start. A second disadvantage is that Fresh Start is dependent on grant funding so the future of the program is tenuous at best.

2. Partner Purdue’s Psychological Counseling Clinic with YWCA Shelter and Fresh Start participants.

Advantages: After observing Fresh Start meetings, our team perceived a need for psychological counseling for the victims of domestic violence. Often the mothers in the program are emotionally immobilized and unable to effectively participate and achieve their goals possibly due to long term psychological problems. If participants are unable to meet the obligations outlined by the Fresh Start staff, then they are terminated from the program. This poses a potential problem because the victims of domestic violence most likely will return to their abusers once support is gone. One possibility for meeting this need is to tap into Purdue University’s Clinical Training Program in the Department of Psychological Sciences. The advantages for partnering are many. Graduate Students in the Clinic could earn valuable hours counseling women and children coming from violent homes, a population that they rarely are involved with. Fresh Start would benefit from the added support in helping the women succeed.

Disadvantages: These are mostly related to funding and whether or not there are enough graduate students admitted to the program to take on this additional area of counseling.

3. Partner DVIPP with School Systems to create education programs in domestic violence prevention (legislation was just passed so schools must provide this necessary education)

The team investigated the educational opportunities offered in our public schools and found much work needed to be done. Early prevention programs are vital in decreasing the amount of domestic and family violence. Not having a substantial amount of education on domestic violence throughout Indiana may be contributing to the high amount of violence that takes place. Luckily, however, the state of Indiana passed a bill requiring all middle and high schools to devote time towards domestic violence education. This occurred as we were writing this policy brief. We hope the schools will turn to the expertise of the YWCA Domestic Violence
Intervention and Prevention Program for help and advice when implementing this important curriculum.

Our recommendations:
1. We recommend that a class be created by Purdue Women’s Studies to serve as an internship for students. The students can begin in the Fall 2010 semester interning under the Fresh Start Case Worker as mentors for the children in Fresh Start. The class has been created and in the spring semester we interviewed students for the opportunity to participate.

2. We recommend that Fresh Start, the YWCA shelter, and Purdue University explore the possibility of creating a partnership between Purdue’s Clinical Training Department in the Department of Psychological Science. We interviewed some of the faculty members from Purdue’s Psychology Department and found enthusiasm for the idea. We explored the idea of clinical graduate students devoting a portion of their clinical hours working with victims of domestic violence at the YWCA. We recommend that the YWCA and Fresh Start continue exploration in this direction.

3. Additionally, in order for our first recommendation to take place, Fresh Start must become a permanent agency. Therefore, we recommend continuous funding for Fresh Start, as the cost of supporting it far outweighs the burden. We observed and participated in meetings with Fresh Start personnel and sincerely believe that this program has the potential to provide positive outcomes for those who fully participate and take advantage of this chance to gain independence and create a family life free from violence.

8. Sources Consulted or Recommended


Indiana State statistics on domestic violence:
http://www.violenceresource.org/stats.htm

Joining Hands to Stop Violence, a Domestic Violence Forum, April 6, 2010, University Church, West Lafayette, IN

Local statistics on domestic violence:
http://www.lafayette.in.gov/egov/docs/120828745539.htm
City of West Lafayette. “Police Department 2008 Report.”
http://www.westlafayette.in.gov/egov/docs/1244133680_289367.pdf
Greater Lafayette YWCA. “Program Statistics.”
http://www.ywca.org/site/pp.asp?c=brJJKUNLG&b=4282115

“Love Bites” Throughout Australia the “love bites” program delivers interactive educational workshops that focus on engaging young people in their own language to discuss key...

National statistics on domestic violence:
http://www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html
http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/fvs.pdf
http://nnedv.org/docs/Census/DVCounts2009/DVCounts09_StateSummary_AllStates_BW.pdf

Our Kids Are Our Community: Fifth Annual Summit: Emphasis on Mentoring, March 26, 2010

Tippecanoe County statistics on domestic violence:

Turning Point Domestic Violence Newsletter, a domestic violence service south of Indianapolis