

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR THE
PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

***NYS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
ADVISORY COUNCIL
TRANSITION REPORT
2010***

Introduction

In the past four years, the Domestic Violence Advisory Council has become a vibrant interagency entity that has driven significant policy changes in the area of domestic violence at no additional cost to the state. It has enhanced data collection; encouraged and facilitated dialogue and sharing among and between agencies and organizations; and strengthened OPDV's efforts to increase public awareness of this issue through the incorporation of domestic violence into the work of the various State agencies represented on the Council. After four productive years, this report captures the essence of the accomplishments and strides the Council has made, while emphasizing the importance of an interagency collaboration and coordination dedicated to addressing the issue of domestic violence.

"The DV Council has been important in providing leadership to ensure domestic violence issues, which affect persons of all ages, including older adults, are given a priority in NYS programmatic efforts."

~NYS Office for the Aging

Background and Goals of the Domestic Violence Advisory Council

The mission and activities of the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence are articulated in Executive Law §575; section 4 of this provision establishes the Advisory Council:

"An advisory council is hereby established to make recommendations on domestic violence related issues and effective strategies for the prevention of domestic violence, to assist in the development of appropriate policies and priorities for effective intervention, public education and advocacy, and to facilitate and assure communication and coordination of efforts among state agencies and between different levels of government, state, federal, and municipal, for the prevention of domestic violence."

The Council includes representation from 14 State agencies, as well as 3 members appointed by the Governor, and 6 members appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of the legislature: the appointed members represent a broad cross-section of service-providers from advocates, to civil attorneys and prosecutors, to judges and legislators. It is directed to meet at least twice annually. Given the breadth of its statutory mandate, the challenge for the Council has always been how to focus its activities in order to ensure that the meetings result in significant policy advice and progress in the area of domestic violence. Past efforts by the Council were successful at highlighting changes needed in the systems' response to domestic violence, but were less adept at effecting those changes. Regular turnover in Council attendance also hampered the ability to achieve real progress on identified issues.

Therefore, in the current administration, several steps were taken to strengthen the impact of the Council. OPDV:

- Conducted outreach to each and every member organization and agency to encourage consistency in representation;
- Assigned one liaison within OPDV to facilitate communication with the Council;
- Invited Council-members to present on achievements to encourage the exchange of ideas and collaboration among members;
- Convened subcommittees to address particular issues raised by the larger Council;

- Encouraged each member to identify concrete activities and take at least one action step on a specific area within domestic violence each year; and
- Invited the Council to memorialize their achievements through contributions to an Annual Domestic Violence Report issued by OPDV.

All of these steps have served to transform the Council into a dynamic and successful example of efficient collaboration with measurable outcomes.

“ Domestic violence affects not only individuals in their home settings, but also may have devastating effects on victims’ abilities to do their jobs, as well as coworkers, employers and others as it spills over to the worksite. The work of the Domestic Violence Advisory Council is critical to addressing the needs of those affected by this abusive behavior, in the workplace and in all areas of their lives.”

~NYS Department of Labor

Recent Achievements of the Domestic Violence Advisory Council

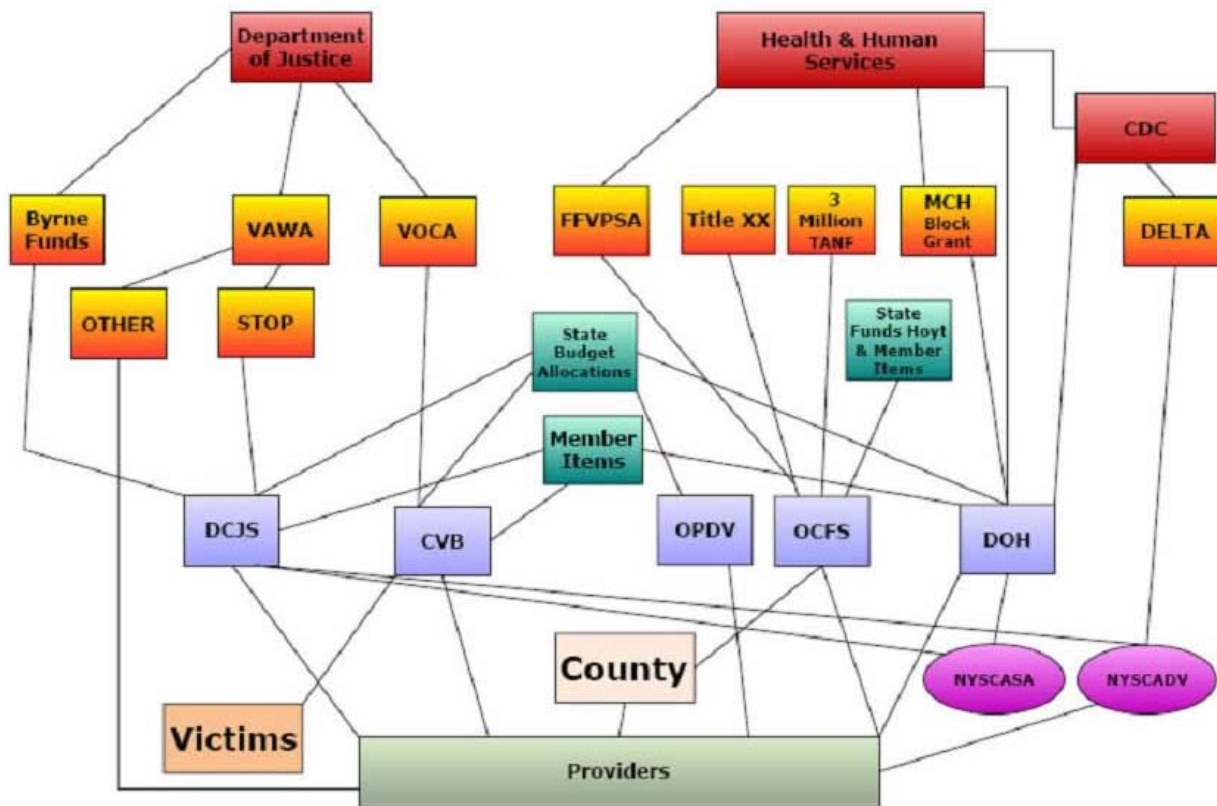
In the past four years, the Advisory Council has developed into an active and constructive team. The most notable recent outcomes of this entity have been:

- The identification of a cost-effective joint reporting system for the State’s funding of domestic violence programs;
- The Domestic Violence Dashboard* and Annual Report; and
- A series of internal policy changes throughout state government, that have improved practice, raised awareness, and enabled cross-agency collaboration in a way that had not been done before.

Addressing How New York State Funds Domestic Violence Services

Between 2007 and 2008, the Advisory Council broke into two subcommittees to tackle two separate but related issues that have long stood in the way of the best possible State response to domestic violence. The first is the way in which domestic violence services are funded. The funding subcommittee, consisting of representatives from state agencies and appointed members, identified the funds they distributed or received and subsequently granted or passed down to domestic violence residential and non-residential services and other service providers such as law enforcement or hospitals. This information was utilized to develop, for the first time, an outline of the complex structure that describes how the State currently allocates over \$45 million for those services. Below is one map created by the Council that tracks most direct funding streams for domestic violence.

New York State Domestic Violence Program Distribution Funding Streams



This illustration emphasizes that our current funding structure is the opposite of streamlined. Committee members discussed that the ramifications of such a system are heavy reporting burdens on providers and agencies, an inability to compare results across systems, and the complete lack of an overall funding strategy regarding domestic violence services. Such a system is ineffective, and results in some funds being used by grantees for staff dedicated only to filling out reports, rather than serving clients. At a time of fiscal crisis, in particular, such an approach is not acceptable. Therefore, DCJS allocated Recovery Act funds to the analysis of whether a joint reporting system could be developed that would respond equally to the needs of providers, local districts, and state agencies. By mid 2010, a solution had been identified that was supported by a majority of the affected entities. Council members that fund domestic violence programs participated in a planning group to analyze next steps, and are finalizing a road map to achieve implementation of the identified plan. Such an effort required that agencies and providers think and act collaboratively, as parts of one big system rather than as isolated units. Such an approach is unusual in government, but encouraged by the relationships developed in the Council.

"Through even greater collaboration, with non-traditional partners, we can deliver a panoply of unparalleled services to DV victims across a broad spectrum of government, not for profit, and private agencies in order to make New York a model for DV prevention. The Council brings the best and brightest experts in the DV field together to problem solve in an attempt to eradicate this crime, all while providing cutting edge creative solutions for victims and give them the protection they deserve".

~ Saratoga County District Attorney James A. Murphy, III

Measuring the Prevalence of Domestic Violence

Research tells us that domestic violence is more common than most people realize – that 1 in 4 women will experience it in their lifetime, that it is the most common cause of intentional homicide of women in New York State, that it is present in 37% of our child welfare cases, and that the total number of reported victims represent 25 - 40% of the assaults to which our police departments respond. However, given that domestic violence is also extremely underreported, its actual prevalence is hard to measure. Some victims report to law enforcement, others go to hospitals, and some may seek no services at all. Government cannot properly address a problem, or determine the success of its response, if it cannot measure the problem. Therefore, the Council created a data subcommittee that pooled what data was available on this problem from their own data sources. Some of the information we knew existed – the number of Orders of Protection issued per year, for example – but some of the information had never been collected before. It was completely innovative to publish all of this data in one place, giving an entire systems snapshot of domestic violence as we currently know it. This document, the Domestic Violence Dashboard, is in its third year. It is beginning to measure trends, and each year we add new data points that agencies develop specifically for this purpose, or that grow out of domestic violence programs and were implemented due to work on the Council. The Dashboard has been used to advance policy discussions amongst the legislature, Chamber, state agencies and the service provider community. This data-driven document is complimented by the Annual Report which memorializes all of the efforts each Council member agency has taken on the issue of domestic violence – never before consolidated, the report grows each year as more agencies develop ways to address domestic violence.

Internal Agency Policy Changes Initiated Out of Council Meetings

One goal of the Annual Report is to ensure that we capture all of the policy changes that agencies develop alone or in collaboration as a result of the work we do as a group. While the totality of those achievements is outlined in the Annual Report**, this brief list indicates the breadth of the Council's reach:

- Some members have added domestic violence status to their EEOC statement as part of all agency hiring decisions;
- OASAS has incorporated, as part of the required data that substance abuse programs report to OASAS as clients are discharged, whether or not during the course of substance abuse treatment an individual was identified as a domestic violence victim or perpetrator;
- The statewide Shine the Light campaign had almost 300 organizational participants this year, in large part due to Council-members involvement;
- Statewide dissemination of the teen dating violence campaign "This Isn't Love" to all high schools and middle schools and OMH youth programs was made possible through relationships fostered at the Council.

"The work of the advisory council to streamline funding and reporting systems helps agencies like Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Services of Saratoga County to focus more effectively on helping victims of abuse and creating social change to end intimate partner violence in our communities."

*~Maggie Fronk, Executive Director
Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Services of Saratoga County*

Future Plans for the Domestic Violence Advisory Council

Each year the Council identifies a particular area within domestic violence upon which to focus, and achieve at least one concrete action step within each member organization. In 2010 the topic was teen dating and abuse. The Council is in the process of identifying its issue topic for next year: one possibility is the area of prevention. While we as a state have a fairly comprehensive system in place to respond to domestic violence, we could do far better on our prevention efforts. Should the Council take on “prevention” as its topic for 2011, we will discuss whether prevention should mean educating our children and young people about healthy relationships; whether it means creating programs for offenders that reduce recidivism and therefore prevent re-abuse; or whether it means instituting comprehensive screening for domestic violence in all of our service systems both to support victims and prevent re-victimization. It is a good example of the type of issue that is best addressed collaboratively. In the meantime, all Council members are working on their data submissions to the Domestic Violence Dashboard and developing their submissions to the Domestic Violence Annual Report.

DCJS Acting Commissioner Sean M. Byrne said “I commend my fellow members of the Domestic Violence Advisory Council for their efforts to champion enhanced data collection, and DCJS is committed to working with our local law enforcement partners to ensure the data they report to us is accurate and timely and can be put to good use by those agencies, and by Council members to develop collaborative policies and programs that will reduce victimization across the state.”

~NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services

Conclusion

Such a complex issue that cuts across multiple criminal justice and human services systems cannot be effectively addressed by one agency alone. The Council is committed to continuing to pool the best knowledge of each member to devise collaborative solutions that change the way New York addresses domestic violence. We look forward next year on working towards the implementation of a joint reporting system that reduces reporting burdens and improves data collection; continuing to enhance the Dashboard with new data, as well as creating county-level dashboards as a tool for communities to discuss their own strengths and challenges; and to continue to use the invaluable network represented by the Council to identify opportunities that strengthen our response to and prevention of domestic violence.

*2009 Domestic Violence Dashboard Project <http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/statistics/nydata/index.html>

**2009 Domestic Violence Annual Report <http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/statistics/reports/dvannual09/>

NEW YORK STATE

OPDV MISSION:

To improve New York State's response to and prevention of domestic violence with the goal of enhancing the safety of all New Yorkers in their intimate and family relationships.

OPDV VISION:

To create a State in which communities and systems are committed to supporting and promoting equality, dignity and respect so that individuals can feel safer in their intimate and family relationships.

NYS Domestic Violence Advisory Council members:

Maggie Fronk, Executive Director
Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Services of Saratoga County

Barbara Hale, Executive Director
YWCA of Genesee County, Inc.

Mary Kornman, Chief, Bureau of Strategic Planning & Crime Control Strategies
Westchester County District Attorney's Office

Susan John, Assemblywoman

James Murphy III, District Attorney
Saratoga County District Attorney's Office

Sharon Townsend, Vice Dean for Family and Matrimonial Law,
New York State Judicial Institute

Michele McKeon, Chief Operating Officer
NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Helene Weinstein, Assemblywoman

Angela Yeboah, Attorney
Sanctuary for Families

NYS Department of Correctional Services

NYS Department of Health

NYS Department of Labor

NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services

NYS Division of Parole

NYS Education Department

NYS Office for the Aging

NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

NYS Office of Children and Family Services

NYS Office of Court Administration

NYS Office of Mental Health

NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

NYS Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives

NYS Office of Victim Services