

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES FOR VICTIMS

New York City Family Justice Centers

Each day in New York City hundreds of domestic violence victims reach out for help and our three New York City Family Justice Centers are there to guide them on the road to living a life free of violence. Domestic violence interrupts almost all aspects of victims' lives – from housing to employment and from support systems to their children's school. To be safe, victims need assistance with all of these issues. Not only do the City's Centers help victims during crisis, but they stay with the victim throughout their journey to safety by providing longer-term services. Clients may walk in and choose which services they want, including counseling, advocacy, meeting with a prosecutor, assistance with shelter and housing, self-sufficiency services, and civil legal assistance – all in their language while their children play safely in the next room.

The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) and the District Attorneys' Offices are the primary partners of the Family Justice Centers. The Centers bring together dedicated domestic violence prosecutors, civil attorneys, and social service providers under one roof to help victims of domestic violence and their families. In total, eight City agencies and 27 community nonprofit providers, whose staff collectively speak over 30 languages, work on-site at these Centers. The City's three Centers just celebrated their 149,000th client visit. The Brooklyn Center opened in 2005, the Queens Center opened in July 2008 and the Bronx Center opened in April 2010. Private/public partnerships support several innovative programs including the Brooke Jackman Family Literacy Program, the Children's Counseling Program and the Self-Sufficiency Program.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Language Line Program

As of July 2005, all City police precincts have direct, instant access to language interpreters 24 hours a day to assist with the investigation of any crime. The Language Line Program allows victims who do not speak English to tell their stories to the police and get the help they need.

New York City Police Department (NYPD)

The NYPD has a Domestic Violence Unit which coordinates the Department's overall domestic violence strategy. There are over 380 Domestic Violence Prevention Officers, Domestic Violence Investigators, and Domestic Violence Sergeants in the City's 76 police precincts and 9 Housing Police Service Areas. The NYPD also has many initiatives aimed at domestic violence prevention, intervention, and outreach including the Home Visit Program, where Domestic Violence Prevention Officers visit residences that have had domestic violence incidents in the past in an effort to prevent future incidences.

Digital 911 System

Since 2002, the Digital 911 system allows judges to hear high-quality digital recordings of victims' 911 calls at arraignment before bail is set. These recordings can be retrieved within hours and have been particularly helpful in prosecuting domestic violence cases.

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Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) System

Implemented by the Department of Correction and the Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator, VINE assists anyone in determining the custody status of inmates within the Department of Correction. VINE also notifies users when an inmate is released or transferred.

Recording of inmate telephone calls

The New York City Department of Correction records inmate telephone conversations; those recordings can be subpoenaed. They have proved to be critically important evidence in domestic violence prosecutions, including to support charges violating a protective order or to demonstrate witness intimidation.

HEALTHCARE INITIATIVES

Project H.E.A.L. (Health Emergency Assistance Link)

Project H.E.A.L. is a comprehensive plan to improve the services provided to domestic violence victims at all 11 City public hospitals. This program enhances the ability of City Hospital staff to identify victims, document injuries and connect victims with social and legal services.

Best Practices Manual for Healthcare Providers

OCDV developed and distributed a "best practices" manual called Medical Providers' Guide to Managing the Care of Domestic Violence Patients within a Cultural Context. The manual assists healthcare providers with the assessment and treatment of domestic violence victims in diverse populations.

Clinician Guide for Identifying, Treating, and Preventing Family Violence

The Clinician Guide serves as a practical reference for preventing, identifying, treating, and managing family violence in the community.

YOUTH EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Healthy Relationship Training Academy

The NYC Healthy Relationship Training Academy is an initiative of OCDV with support from the AVON Foundation for Women and empowerment by mark through the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York. The Academy offers bilingual workshops in English and Spanish on the topics of dating violence and healthy relationships for adolescents, young adults and parents. Each workshop is facilitated by two trained Peer Educators and consists of highly interactive activities designed to encourage discussion and critical thinking about the challenging topic of relationships. The Academy also offers training for staff members of organizations who work with adolescents and young adults. The curricula is inclusive of diverse populations including immigrants, teen parents, runaway and homeless youth, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender youth. Since the Academy's inception in 2005, over 1,250 workshops have been held with over 24,500 young people.

Workshops are offered year-round, Monday through Saturday, for organizations in New York City. The Peer Educators will travel to your location to facilitate the workshop. In order to schedule a workshop, visit www.nyc.gov/domesticviolence/academy.

OUTREACH, AWARENESS, AND EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Raising Awareness of the Right to a Healthy Relationship

In 2010, OCDV launched an ongoing citywide public education campaign, in English and Spanish, consisting of posters and palm cards placed in supermarkets, banks, pharmacies, restaurants, financial centers and City agencies along with a Spanish-language public service announcement radio campaign. This effort was created to increase communities' knowledge about domestic violence and where to get help. The campaign also aims to specifically reach people with disabilities by including information on the posters that highlights signs of abuse that people with disabilities may face in their relationships. The campaign is partly funded by Verizon Wireless HopeLine through the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City.

In 2011, OCDV expanded this campaign by launching an intensive outreach in neighborhoods with a high level of domestic violence or where family-related homicides recently occurred. Public education materials were distributed at local subway stations, and a domestic violence prevention message was broadcast on a local Spanish and Russian language radio stations. In total, more than 8,000 pieces of public education material were distributed through this initiative through December 31, 2011.

Language Access Plan

In July 2008, Mayor Bloomberg signed Executive Order 120, creating a centralized language access policy for New York City. Executive Order 120 mandates that all City agencies that provide direct public services create a language access implementation plan in order to ensure meaningful language access to their services. OCDV's website and educational material are available in up to 14 languages. OCDV's language access implementation plan can be viewed at www.nyc.gov/domesticviolence.

"We Are New York" Adult Education Program

OCDV partnered with the Mayor's Office of Adult Education and the City University of New York to create an episode that addresses domestic violence for the "We Are New York" series. The "We Are New York" show is designed to help immigrants learn to speak English and simultaneously learn about vital city services that they can access. The program continues to be aired on New York City Television.

2006 Citywide Public Awareness Campaign

In May 2006, OCDV launched a citywide public awareness campaign to encourage New Yorkers to seek assistance if they or someone they knew was a victim of domestic violence. The three-quarter million dollar print advertising campaign ran for three months citywide. Developed pro bono by the advertising firm of McCann Erickson, the campaign was featured in subways, bus shelters, telephone kiosks and magazines. The campaign was unveiled in conjunction with V-Day's Until the Violence Stops: NYC, a two-week festival of artistic performances and community events designed to bring the issue of violence against women and girls to the forefront in New York City.

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2006 "Bystander" Public Awareness Campaign

In the spring of 2006, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and CONNECT, a community based nonprofit domestic violence prevention organization, launched a "bystander" campaign in the Crown Heights and Flatbush neighborhoods of Brooklyn. The campaign's goal was to encourage bystanders to call the helpline number as well as to educate the caller regarding the important role that neighbors, family and community members may play in stopping domestic violence.

EMERGENCY SHELTER AND HOUSING INITIATIVES

Human Resources Administration (HRA) Alternative to Shelter Program (ATS)

The program gives domestic violence victims and their children the option of remaining safely in their own homes through the provision of security technology and a coordinated response.

Temporary Housing and Emergency Shelter

HRA administers 45 state-licensed emergency domestic violence shelters, including one directly operated by HRA. Domestic violence victims are provided with a safe environment and a range of support services, including counseling, advocacy, and referral services.

Department of Homeless Services

Starting in 2008, OCDV has partnered with the Department of Homeless Services to train homeless population shelter staff on domestic violence awareness and service referrals.

ELDER ABUSE INITIATIVES

New York City Elder Abuse Network

The New York City Department for the Aging established the New York City Elder Abuse Network in 2006. The Network was formed by a nucleus of agencies who indicated a strong desire to expand and strengthen their activities in the area of elder abuse. The Network has a broad membership of over 50 agencies, including law enforcement personnel, district attorneys, city agencies, academic institutions, nonprofit providers of victim services, financial service providers, and other interested community professionals.

CHILD SAFETY INITIATIVES

The Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

The Domestic Violence Policy and Planning Unit works to inform ACS of the delivery of services and practice so that families and children who are involved in the child welfare system and are affected by domestic violence are identified and receive the services they need. ACS also oversees two initiatives which provide on-going training and technical assistance to preventive and foster care agencies as well as community based programs throughout the city.

CITY LEGISLATION

Mayor Bloomberg has signed key legislation in order to increase the safety of victims:

June 6, 2005, Local Law 61 – Created a domestic violence fatality review committee. Headed by OCDV, this committee includes City agency representatives, community based organization representatives and survivors who review and analyze aggregate domestic violence fatality

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information to detect patterns and demographic changes and make recommendations to improve victim services with the goal of reducing the number of domestic violence homicides. In December 2006, the FRC issued its first report, outlining its key findings with specific recommendations relevant to four general areas of opportunity which may further reduce family-related violence. Annual reports are available on the OCDV website.

December 22, 2003, Local Law 75 – Amended the City's Human Rights Law by requiring that all employers provide reasonable accommodation to victims of domestic violence, sexual offenses and stalking. This augmented the current law (Local Law 1 of 2001) which made it unlawful for an employer to fire, refuse to hire, or discriminate against victims of domestic violence.

December 19, 2002, Local Law 43 – Added a new section to the Administrative Code which ensures that domestic violence victims who apply for emergency shelter or related services are not denied those services based on the lack of documentation of the incidence of domestic violence.

December 19, 2002, Local Law 44 – Amended the Administrative Code to expand the existing restrictions on the issuance of a permit to purchase and possess a rifle or a shotgun to anyone who has been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, a misdemeanor crime of assault within the last ten years, any combination of three misdemeanors, and to anyone who is subject to certain orders of protection issued for family offenses.