

## **Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services in King County, An Overview**

Domestic violence and sexual assault are major problems in our communities. For example:

- It is estimated that 1/3 of American girls and 1/5 of American boys are sexually abused by the age of 16. One out of 4 women report being sexually victimized as adults.
- In a recent poll by KING5 TV, 63% of respondents considered sexual assault a significant problem.
- In nearly 3 out of 4 instances of all rape and sexual harassment, the offender was not a stranger. For college women, in 9 out of 10 cases of rape and attempted rape, the victim knew the assailant.
- An estimated 25% of American women are abused by their intimate partners at some time in their lives; the prevalence for men is estimated to be about 8%. In a 1998 survey of King County adults, 17% of respondents said they had experienced an assault or injury perpetrated by an intimate partner at some time in their lives.
- Approximately 30% of female homicide victims in Washington State are killed by their intimate partners. In King County between 1999-2001, at least 34 deaths were connected to domestic violence (this includes homicides and homicide/suicides).

The impact of these problems on the individuals involved and on the entire community is profound. Child victims of sexual assault often display extreme changes in behavior as a result of the assault, such as withdrawal, low self-esteem, aggression, recurrent nightmares, self-destructive behaviors, eating disorders, and failing grades. These difficult behaviors in the child may escalate to serious psychological impairments, drug and alcohol abuse, and/or running away from home. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the homeless kids in our community have experienced sexual abuse before leaving home. Without intervention or help, the child's normal psychological development can be negatively affected.

"I have experience. It happened when I was younger. I have been sexually abused and it hurts to talk about it. I have to live with it I know but now I wish I could change the past but I can't. Now I am scared to get married and have my own children because what happened to me." - 3rd grade child

Women who have experienced sexual assault are five times more likely to have been given a diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than women who had not been sexually victimized. Similarly, victims are three times more likely than non-victims to have experienced depression. Women who have been victimized are also significantly more likely to engage in binge drinking or drug use than women who have not been victimized.

Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44 in the United States; it is estimated that 22 to 35 percent of all women seeking medical treatment in hospital emergency rooms are victims of spousal/partner abuse.

Domestic violence is the number one reason women and children in King County become homeless.

"I needed that time away from the abuse to realize what the abuse was. I thought it was just a way of life.... That is not life." - *domestic violence shelter resident*  
"This is the first time I've felt safe, that I could sleep soundly." - *dv shelter resident*

Children are profoundly affected by domestic violence. Studies suggest that in 30% to 60% of all families where women are being beaten, their children are also the victims of abuse by the same perpetrator. Whether or not they are directly abused themselves, children are profoundly impacted by the violence in their homes, and are often at higher risk for physical, emotional, and behavioral problems, including an increased likelihood of becoming abusive themselves.

"I saw Daddy put a knife on mom's neck." 3 year old  
"He killed our puppy. That made me most sad." - *Young child*  
"He saw everything his dad did to me. He would cry and want me to care for him. But then he hits me hard & hurts me & his baby sister." -*Mother of toddler and infant*

The effects of domestic violence and sexual assault extend beyond the individual victims to friends, family members, and the entire community.

## I. TYPES OF SERVICES

King County is fortunate to have a comprehensive, regional array of services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault that is seen as a model in the nation. Agencies are located in all regions of the County, and provide services to survivors from any geographic area. A number of agencies provide culturally specific services to survivors from various ethnic communities; gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans communities; faith-based communities; and survivors with disabilities. They have developed innovative service models specifically designed for their communities.

There is some overlap between the issues of sexual assault (SA) and domestic violence (DV), and the two systems collaborate closely. However, the issues differ in many significant ways, including the dynamics, victim needs, criminal justice system response, and prevention education work. In order to provide the best services to the highest number of people, there are two distinct service delivery systems - one for sexual assault, the other for domestic violence.

Agencies providing domestic violence and sexual assault services in King County include:

Domestic violence programs:

- Broadview Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing (Seattle)
- Chaya (serving S. Asian communities)
- Chinese Information and Service Center
- Domestic Abuse Women's Network - DAWN (South King County)
- Eastside Domestic Violence Program (East King County)

- Jewish Family Service - Project DVORA
- New Beginnings for Battered Women and Their Children (Seattle)
- Northwest Family Life (Christian faith-based)
- Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse
- Salvation Army - Catherine Booth House and Hickman House
- Seattle Indian Health Board
- YWCA - East Cherry and South King County branches

State Accredited Sexual Assault Programs (Community Sexual Assault Programs):

- Children's Response Center
- Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress
- King County Sexual Assault Resource Center

Harborview and KCSARC serve children, teens and adults throughout the entire county; Children's Response Center specializes in children and teen victims in East and North county and is managed by HCSATS.

Programs with both sexual assault and domestic violence components:

- Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services (DV & State Accredited SA)
- Asian Counseling and Referral Services (SA, Teen DV)
- Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center
- Communities Against Rape and Abuse
- Consejo Counseling and Referral Service
- Refugee Women's Alliance

Several additional agencies providing other types of services (for example legal, chemical dependency) have staff or programs with a specific domestic violence focus. In addition, there are a number of agencies and private businesses providing intervention for batterers and sexual offender treatment. They tend to be considered part of the criminal justice, rather than social service, response, and are primarily funded through fees and restitution.

### **Domestic Violence Services**

The current domestic violence service system has been developed over the last three decades as a result of intentional regional planning as well as responsiveness to demonstrated emergent community needs. The King County system includes many of the elements identified as being necessary by the federal Violence Against Women Office. Services are provided at no cost to clients (with the exception of transitional housing, where residents pay a percentage of their incomes).

#### **Crisis Intervention, Information and Referral,**

Several agencies operate 24-hour crisis lines. These crisis lines often serve as the first point of access to shelter and other services, and also provide thousands of additional abuse victims, their friends, and family members crisis counseling, safety planning, information, and referral. Many professionals are also provided with information and consultation through the crisis lines. ADWAS is now operating the national Deaf Domestic Violence hotline. The Washington State Domestic Violence

Hotline can connect callers to any of these local hotlines as well as other agencies (1-800-562-6025).

### **Emergency Shelter**

King County has four confidential domestic violence emergency shelter facilities (81 beds) specifically designed to house battered women and their children who are fleeing dangerous abusers. Their locations are kept confidential, and they have systems in place to protect the physical safety of residents and staff. All offer adult and child residents a range of services and assistance. Several agencies have motel vouchers to house families for a limited time. Several homeless shelters for women and children have specific domestic violence components.

### **Transitional Housing**

Six agencies operate transitional housing facilities that are specifically designed to meet the needs of DV survivors needing longer-term housing and support. All offer a variety of intensive advocacy services for the women and children they house for up to 24 months. One program is for women dealing with the dual problems of domestic violence and recovery from substance abuse, and there are new facilities geared towards deaf women and Latino families. Several other agencies are either developing plans for transitional housing facilities or have a few housing units available.

### **Community Advocacy**

Most of the services provided to victims and survivors who are not in residential programs fall under the category of "community advocacy". Services commonly offered by most community-based advocacy programs include but are not limited to:

- Safety planning.
- Advocacy and support for any relevant issue identified by the survivor.
- Assisting survivors in finding shelter, transitional and long-term housing.
- Rental Assistance, Emergency assistance (for example, taxi vouchers, food)
- Support groups, which may be structured or unstructured.
- Legal advocacy, including explaining legal options, accompanying clients to court, and making referrals to legal service agencies.
- Supportive services for children of program participants and parenting support.

### **Community Engagement**

Recognizing that the majority of survivors turn to their friends, family and personal networks for support, many King County DV agencies have developed community engagement strategies. Community engagement encompasses a range of activities that focus on getting more community members involved in preventing domestic violence and supporting safe and equitable relationships. All take into account the needs, cultural histories, and practices of the communities for which they are designed. This is an area of great promise and innovation, and several of these programs are recognized as national models and are being replicated elsewhere in the country.

### **Community Education, Professional Training, and Systems Advocacy**

All of the community-based survivor service agencies work to improve the capacity of other providers to respond more effectively to the unique safety, legal and emotional needs of domestic violence survivors, and to be more physically and culturally accessible to survivors from all communities. They provide community education on DV issues, training and consultation to other professionals and community leaders, and advocate for improved policies and practices in many fields. This has greatly improved the "domestic violence competency" of the entire social service network.

### **Sexual Assault Services**

King County's sexual assault service delivery system meets the state of Washington's plan for sexual assault services (adopted by the legislature in 1995- Washington was the first state in the country to develop a comprehensive plan for the establishment of an accredited system of services for victims and their families). This plan requires each county to have the following services available to victims and their families. Some of these services must be provided at no cost, for others a sliding scale or other fee mechanism is appropriate.

### **Crisis Intervention and Information and Referral**

Immediate, 24-hour response is available to victims, their families and others who have questions or concerns about sexual assault or sexual abuse. KCSARC maintains the 24-hr sexual assault resource line staffed by professionals; this service is a critical resource in the overall system. HCSATS has staff at the Emergency Department to respond to victims in person and by phone

### **Legal Advocacy**

Legal Advocacy is available to victims and families as they navigate the often lengthy and confusing criminal justice process. Legal advocates act on behalf of the victim to insure they are informed, included and that their rights are upheld, and are independent of law enforcement and the King County Prosecutor's Office.

### **Medical Advocacy and Forensic Medical Evaluations**

While medical evaluations can be obtained from all emergency departments, HCSATS is the primary provider of forensic medical evaluations in the county. HCSATS and KCSARC coordinate non-emergent medical evaluations for child and teens at the Seattle- King County Health Department in Federal Way.

### **Individual and Group Therapy**

Sexual assault specific support groups, therapy groups and individual counseling is provided to promote healing for adult rape victims, child and teen victims and adult survivors of childhood sexual assault. Research has documented very significant clinical findings regarding the importance of early, individual, abuse-focused therapy with sexually victimized children.

### **Professional Training and Community Education and Awareness**

Sexual Assault programs have an extensive education aimed at increasing community awareness of and knowledge about sexual abuse/assault, building

community members' skills, developing strategies within the community to prevent sexual abuse/assault, and promoting attitudes, behaviors and social conditions that will reduce and ultimately eliminate factors that cause or contribute to sexual violence. This has been particularly important as programs help individuals/neighborhoods respond to the return of known and convicted sex offenders to their communities. In addition, sexual assault programs provide training to professionals from many fields about all aspects sexual assault and abuse.

## II. MAJOR GAPS

### Domestic violence services:

Existing agencies cannot come close to meeting the demand for services:

- Emergency Shelters are turning away **10 to 15 requests** for shelter for each person who gains entry. Even assuming a high degree of duplication in these numbers, the need is clearly many times greater than current capacity.
- Only a fraction of those who need transitional housing, community advocacy, counseling, and legal advocacy actually receive it. (For example, transitional housing providers report that they receive approximately 20 qualified applicants for every opening they have. Over 48% of **clients who received services** in King County in 1999 cited legal advocacy as an unmet service need.)
- Services to children and youth, civil legal assistance (family law, immigration), and prevention programs are minimal. The most common unmet service needs for children cited by mothers receiving services were counseling (40%), food or clothing (26%), and therapeutic groups (20%).
- Only a few agencies can consistently engage in the kind of prevention, early intervention, and community mobilization strategies that are important to ultimately ending domestic violence and supporting safe and equitable relationships.
- Survivors from refugee and immigrant communities and communities of color, survivors with limited English proficiency, survivors with disabilities, and GLBT survivors face additional barriers to receiving adequate, appropriate services. The need for interpreters among clients receiving domestic violence services nearly doubled from 1995 (7.9%) to 1999 (14.6%).

The current political and economic environment is having a profound impact on survivors' ability to gain safety and freedom from abuse, including:

- increasing anti-immigrant sentiment
- the crisis in affordable housing
- the stress on our community's range of economic, health and human service support systems

Clearly, our community would benefit from an increase in emergency shelter facilities, other temporary housing options such as motel vouchers, and domestic violence specific transitional housing. The ultimate goal is to decrease the need for these emergency services by offering a balanced array of crisis intervention, support, prevention, early intervention, and community capacity building.

## **Sexual Assault Services**

- A significant number of victims- adults and children- do not seek assistance from anyone after a sexual assault. A study commissioned by the Office of Crime Victim Advocacy indicated that Washington State has the highest rate of sexual assault in the country, that 38% of victims do not seek assistance from anyone and 15% report to law enforcement. We also know that this varies by age, with the younger women in the study being more likely to seek assistance and or report than the older women. However, taken as a whole, there are a significant number of people who experience sexual assault and are not getting services.
- Male victims are less likely to receive services than are female victims of any age. Boys are victimized at rates not dissimilar from girls (1/3 girls and 1/5 boys by age 18), yet boys are underrepresented in reporting and in those seeking assistance.
- Sexual assault specific therapy services, for children, adult rape and adult survivors of childhood sexual assault, are in very short supply. There are long waiting lists for therapy services.
- Responding to community concerns about sex offenders and safety is an increasing need. As communities become more aware and concerned about known sex offenders, there is a great need (and opportunity) to discuss safety and prevention as an on-going activity and issue. It is important for people to understand that known offenders only present one part of the risk, as most offenders are known only to those they victimized.
- As a result of the increased awareness of sex offenders in the community, there is continuing demand for prevention and education services geared to children/youth and families as well.

## **III. SUBREGIONAL DIFFERENCES**

The need for domestic violence and sexual assault services is high throughout King County. There is a need to maintain a range of services throughout the region. However, each of the County's 4 sub-regions faces unique challenges.

- South King County in particular has been impacted by rapid population growth and a greatly increasing percentage of its residents being low income (57% of King County recipients of Temporary Aide to Needy Families, 56% of children requesting school-based free lunches, and 55% of children receiving food stamps live in South King County). This has resulted in a greatly increased demand for services in this region.
- East King County tends to underreport a number of human service problems including domestic violence and sexual assault. Eastside service providers cite a reluctance on the part of more prominent or affluent domestic violence survivors to come for services due to shame, potential lack of income, and fear of embarrassing a partner and making matters worse. There is a greater tendency for sexual assault survivors in many Eastside communities to use private therapists rather than non-profit organizations for help, and to avoid reporting to law enforcement.

- South, North and East King County are home to an increasing number of immigrants, refugees and people of color, requiring more culturally appropriate and accessible services. These subregions also share challenges of geographic distance, lack of transportation, and limited availability of services in rural areas.
- For sexual assault, the noticeable sub-regional difference is the proportion of children and teens. Child sexual assault is more frequently reported to law enforcement/CPS than is adult rape. Families and professionals are also more likely to see the need for services for child/teen victims/than for adults. In part because South County has more children than any other region, it also has the highest number of requests for help and reports to law enforcement.

#### **IV. OUTCOMES**

Domestic violence service programs collect a variety of outcome data as well as qualitative information about service recipients' experiences. Common outcomes for dv programs include:

- Increased safety for domestic violence survivors and their children
- Increased survivor understanding of community resources and legal options
- Increased capacity of family, friends and community to support survivors and hold abusers accountable
- Increased community awareness and involvement in supporting safe and equitable relationships
- Improvements in how systems and institutions respond to domestic violence
- Children/youth affected by violence, abuse or neglect develop or strengthen coping abilities

Common sexual assault outcomes include:

- The degree to which therapy clients have a reduction in their trauma symptoms
- The ease in which services are accessed
- Increased understanding of dynamics of sexual assault, ways to reduce risk and ways to create a safer community