



In Touch

Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition

January/February 2011

One person with passion is better than forty people merely interested.

-E.M. Forster
English novelist, short story writer, and essayist

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Local Advocate Part of National Roundtable



Gina Clyde, Bright Horizons (left) with Lynn Rosenthal, White House Advisor on Violence Against Women.

On December 10, Gina Clyde, Program Director at Bright Horizons in Norfolk, attended a roundtable discussion on teen dating violence, sexual assault, and related youth violence, hosted by Vice President Biden's office in Washington D.C. Lynn Rosenthal, White House Advisor on Violence Against Women, facilitated the discussion among the group of 25 researchers, professors, advocates, and teen victims.

Discussion was held on:

- ▶ the scope of the problem,
- ▶ why young people's attitudes are tolerant of abuse,
- ▶ which issues are more crucial to address, and
- ▶ the best way for programs and policy to address the issue.

Many participants agreed that peer-to-peer education and outreach works for the teen population. Many also agreed that they would like to see a fourth "R" (relationships) in schools, which would mean a mandatory healthy relationship education class for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. A small group of government officials listened to the discussion and asked questions afterwards regarding what policies and funding would be beneficial to the prevention of teen dating violence and sexual assault.

"It's encouraging to know Biden's office is very concerned about these issues and wants input on what action steps to take for our country's youth. It's also exciting to know with the youth outreach teams Bright Horizons already has in place, we are on target with our prevention work in this area. This was an amazing opportunity and I am very fortunate to have been part of such an outstanding group of professionals that truly care about our teens," said Gina.

Bright Horizons has two youth outreach teams, BRAVO (Bullying Recognition and Anti-Violence Organization) in O'Neill and HEROS (Helping to Empower and Respect Other Students) in Norfolk. The National Center for Victims of Crime recommended Ms. Clyde as a roundtable participant based on her work with teens.

Ms. Rosenthal and her staff will be compiling the discussion and ideas. They plan to keep in touch with participants on how they will be using the ideas gathered for future policy and funding.

Step Up! Speak Out! - Prevention Efforts in Nebraska

Awareness Months Start the Year

National Stalking Awareness Month

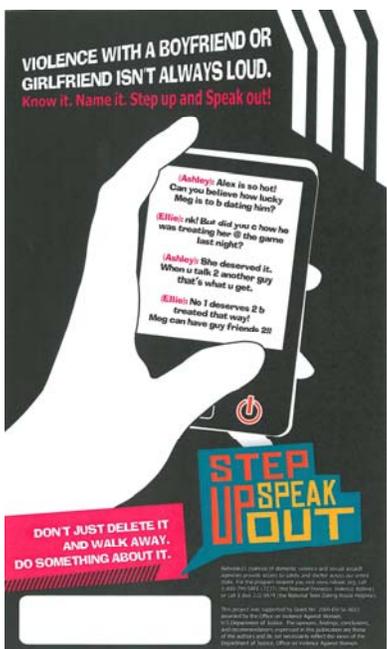


January is recognized nationally as Stalking Awareness Month. First recognized in 2004, this month is a time to discuss stalking, the impact on victims, ways to hold offenders accountable, and methods to prevent stalking.

Each year in the United States 3.4 million people over the age of 18 years are stalked. The majority (75%) are stalked by someone they know, and 30% are stalked by a current or former intimate partner. (Statistics from Stalking Fact Sheet, Stalking Resource Center, 2009.)

For more information about stalking and for materials about awareness month, please visit the national Stalking Resource Center at www.ncvc.org/src or www.stalkingawarenessmonth.org. You can also contact Sarah at the Coalition, sarahb@ndvsac.org.

National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month



February is recognized as national Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. First recognized as a week; it was expanded to a month to recognize the severity of the issue. According to a recent study, one in five teens in a serious relationship reported being bit, slapped or pushed by a partner. Young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rates of relationship violence. (Statistics from the Teen Dating Violence Fact Sheet, National Center for Victims of Crime, 2007.)

For more information about teen dating violence, visit the national Teen Dating Violence Resource Center, a program of the National Center for Victims of Crime, www.ncvc.org (click on dating violence resource project) on the left side). Rachel (rachelo@ndvsac.org) or Sarah (Sarahb@ndvsac.org) at the Coalition can also provide resources.

Stalking and dating violence often overlap with other forms of violence, including bullying, domestic abuse, and sexual assault. When creating prevention programs, it is necessary to recognize the overlap of tactics used by perpetrators and address the root causes of violence.

The Coalition recently unveiled two new posters on dating violence and stalking (pictured above). The posters include a space for local program information. To receive electronic copies of these posters, please contact Rachel at rachelo@ndvsac.org.

Technology Safety Concerns with Social Media

Often the first instinct with social media safety is to go 'offline'. While this increases the safety factor, this also removes the positive impact social media can have for a survivor. Following basic safety practices can help minimize the risks associated with social online connectivity.

Survivors are often dealing with the issues resulting from isolation and loss of personal control. Social media offers both a way to connect with people and an environment that the survivor has some measure of control over. Creating a social media profile offers an opportunity to recreate themselves in an environment that the user controls.

There are many forms of social media and numerous websites. There are online web communities such as Facebook and MySpace. There are also other ways we can connect online, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, school alumni sites or online blogs. Online photo and video sharing sites such as Photobucket, PicasaWeb, Flickr and YouTube also offer opportunities to share and connect.

'Community' based forums are another way to communicate with others on the web who share common interest. The forums generally deal with specific topics such as medical issues, parenting, local activities or sports. There are also sites devoted to posting information for job seekers. Posted resumes can often times contain a large amount of information that would otherwise be considered 'sensitive.'

Each site has its own privacy and safety settings. Detailing these settings for each site would take all of the pages of our newsletter, and several settings would be out of date at print time. Instead be aware of the safety and privacy settings of each of the social media sites that is used, and occasionally double check those settings. More than one of the mentioned sites is well known for changing settings on a fairly frequent basis. It is common for some of the sites to have a 'new' setting once a month. There have also been incidents where settings have switched back to default (not as safe) when updates are made to the system.

Some basic safety concepts for using social media:

- ☞ Be aware of the audience. Who is allowed to see what is posted? A simple guideline is "Don't post anything you would not want on a billboard."
- ☞ Check security frequently. Make sure that settings are locked down.
- ☞ Be aware of what is posted. If posting pictures, avoid recognizable locations, landmarks, or acquaintances if there are concerns about who may see them.
- ☞ It is OK to 'de-friend' or 'un-invite' someone. (This simply removes them from an online group.) This is suggested if unwanted 'sharing' of information is suspected.

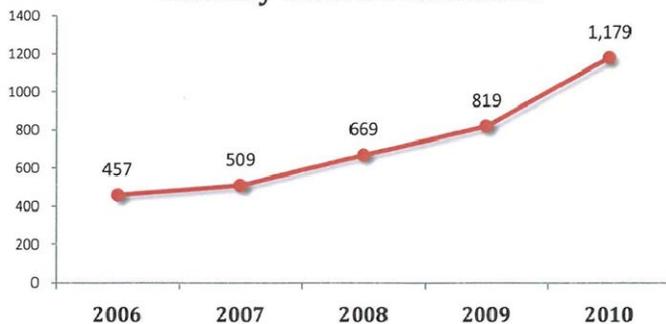
Remember, the audience is invisible. There is no way to know exactly who may be viewing this information. Obviously the safest way to prevent anyone from viewing online information is to go 'off the grid.' Since this is unlikely, the next best thing is to be aware of what is being posted, the security settings of the site and who has access to this information.

Domestic and Sexual Violence in Military Communities

For the past decade an increasing focus has been placed on supporting victims and survivors whose partners are in the military. The U.S. Department of Defense convened a task force on domestic violence from 2001-2003. The final report included a suggested model for the intervention process; protocols for victim advocates, commanding officers, law enforcement, and others; a sample military protective order; and more. (Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence Third Year Report, 2003, as posted on www.ncdsv.org/images/Year3Report2003.pdf)

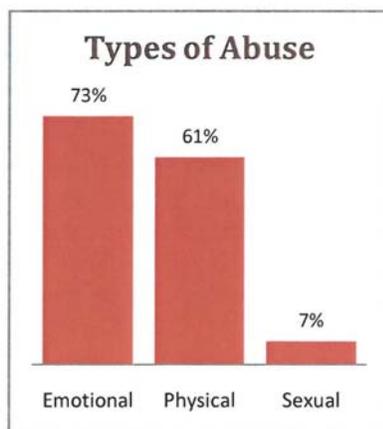
A task force on sexual assault was also held in 2004, culminating in the creation of the Joint Task Force for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response in October 2004. This task force became a permanent office in 2005, and is now the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. This office coordinates numerous initiatives including training, annual reports, research, and awareness materials. More information can be found at www.sapr.mil.

Military Calls Documented



The National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH) recently reviewed the number of military calls between 2006 and 2010. In that time frame the number of calls has more than doubled (see chart). The highest category of abuse discussed by the callers was emotional abuse, followed by physical abuse (see chart).

The callers were predominately female (92%) and Caucasian (65%). The largest age group was 25-35 years (42%), followed by under 25 years (27%). The callers also reported several barriers to receiving services, including unavailability of services, transportation, mental health, gender, disabilities, and legal services.



To address the growing need for support to victims from the military community, the Battered Women's Justice Project (BWJP) has created a new project, Building Effective Civilian Responses to Military-Related Victims of Intimate Partner Violence. This project will include people who are active duty military, Reserve or National Guard personnel, veterans, or civilian partners of offenders who are military personnel or veterans. It will also seek to address the co-occurrence of combat-related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and intimate partner violence.

For more information about the BWJP project, contact Glenna Tinney with the Battered Women's Justice Project, gtnney@bwjp.org or 703-822-8118. To obtain general information about intimate partner violence and the military, please contact the Coalition at 402-476-6256.

Tax Credits & Options May Impact Survivors

It's that time of year again...time to file your taxes!

It is important for advocates to be familiar with some of the possible credits and options available to victims and survivors as they file their taxes. These options may increase their tax return, creating additional financial resources.

Some of the credits are described below. Websites for additional information are also included.

Earned Income Tax Credit

According to the Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition of Nebraska, the Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC, is a tax credit for eligible taxpayers who work, but do not earn high incomes. Taxpayers who qualify and claim the credit could pay less federal tax, pay no tax or even get a tax refund beyond the amount of tax withheld. To qualify for Earned Income Tax Credit or EITC, you must have earned income from employment, self-employment or another source and meet certain rules. In addition, you must either meet the additional rules for Workers without a Qualifying Child or have a child that meets all the Qualifying Child Rules for you. The EITC does not impact most public benefits.

There may be both a federal and state credit. According to Kids Count in Nebraska 2010 Report, in 2009, \$27,455,000 was refunded in Nebraska through the state EITC.

Sources: <http://www.canhelp.org/EITC.htm> and <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96406,00.html> and KidsCount in Nebraska 2010 Report (Voices for Children in Nebraska)

Child Tax Credit

The Child Tax Credit is a nonrefundable credit and may be as much as \$1,000 per qualifying child depending upon your income. The Additional Child Tax Credit is a refundable credit and may give you a refund even if you do not owe any taxes. The credit is for certain individuals who receive less than the full amount of the Child Tax Credit. For a brochure on the child tax credit, visit: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3965.pdf>

Source: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3965.pdf> (brochure)

Child and Dependent Care Expenses

You may be able to claim the credit if you pay someone to care for your dependent who is under age 13 or for your spouse or dependent who is not able to care for himself/herself. The credit can be up to 35% of your expenses. To qualify, you must pay these expenses so you can work or look for work. There may be both federal and state credits.

According to Kids Count in Nebraska 2010 Report, in 2008 the total amount received through the Nebraska Child and Dependent Care credit was \$12,484,000 (refundable and non-refundable credit).

Source: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p503.pdf> and KidsCount in Nebraska 2010 Report (Voices for Children in Nebraska)

Continued on page six

Tax Credits *continued from page five*

Innocent Spouse Relief

By requesting innocent spouse relief, you can be relieved of responsibility for paying tax, interest, and penalties if your spouse (or former spouse) improperly reported items or omitted items on your tax return. Generally, the tax, interest, and penalties that qualify for relief can only be collected from your spouse (or former spouse).

However, you are jointly and individually responsible for any tax, interest, and penalties that do not qualify for relief. The IRS can collect these amounts from either you or your spouse (or former spouse).

Source: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=129862,00.html>

VITA Sites

Each year Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites are established to assist people with filing taxes. The VITA Program offers free tax help to people with low- to moderate-incomes who cannot prepare their own tax returns. Certified volunteers sponsored by various organizations receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country.

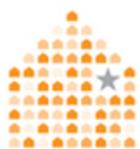
VITA sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations. Most locations also offer free electronic filing. To locate the nearest VITA site, call 1-800-906-9887 or check this partial VITA site list online. (This list does not include every VITA site.)

Source: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=107626,00.html>

Note: This information is not meant to be construed as legal advice. It is provided solely for informational purposes.

WomensLaw.org Merges with NNEDV

WomensLaw.org
Because knowledge is power.



NATIONAL NETWORK
TO END DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE

NNEDV

WomensLaw.org recently merged with the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). For the past several years WomensLaw.org and NNEDV have partnered on numerous projects, including tech safety, confidentiality and legal rights.

Each month approximately 75,000 people visit the WomensLaw.org website. Staff respond to nearly 500 people through an online legal hotline.

WomensLaw was founded in 2000. Its mission is to provide easy-to-understand legal information and resources to women living with or escaping domestic violence or sexual assault. By reaching out through the Internet, they strive to empower women and girls to lead independent lives, free from abuse. Visit www.WomensLaw.org for more information.

Source: Email communication from the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), November 3, 2010, and www.womenslaw.org.

What's New at the Coalition?

Increased Assistance to Immigrant Victims & Survivors

Nebraska's population includes a growing number of immigrant families. Many of the women and children are survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and/or trafficking. Because of this, specific immigration relief options were created by Congress to assist immigrant victims of violence. In 2007, the Coalition obtained recognition from the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), and two staff became accredited to provide assistance with immigration applications.

In 2009, the Coalition's cultural services staff provided immigration assistance to 57 individuals and 76 derivatives, such as spouses and children, for a total of 133 people. In 2010, the number of new applications nearly doubled, rising to 102 applications, plus 69 derivatives, for a total of 171 people assisted. To date no applications have been denied.

For more information regarding immigration relief options available to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking, contact the cultural services staff at the Coalition's Lexington office, 308-324-6256. They can also be reached via email at kellied@ndvsac.org, tishb@ndvsac.org, and anam@ndvsac.org.

Reaching and Teaching Teens to Stop Violence

The Reaching and Teaching Teens to Stop Violence has been updated! First created in 1996, the curriculum includes five units: sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, healthy relationships, and gender violence.

The updates include the creation of a new appendix that includes additional lesson plans for teachers and others working with youth. Regional meetings will be held in February to discuss the curriculum with local domestic violence/sexual assault programs.

Copies of the curriculum will be available soon. Contact Rachel for more information, rachelo@ndvsac.org.

Holidays Shouldn't Hurt: Display Raises Awareness



During the holiday season Hope Crisis Center used the holiday activities to raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence and their services. The program participated in the community's Festival of Trees.

A tree was set up in Fairbury and Beatrice, with silhouettes of Silent Witnesses hung as decoration as well as cards with the local hotline number. Life size Silent Witnesses were included, with both adult and child figures. Presents describing program services were placed under the tree.

Special thanks to Ben Atherton-Zeman, VoicesofMen.org, for allowing the Coalition to modify his "Holidays Shouldn't Hurt" poster campaign for use in Nebraska.

Nebraska Domestic Violence
Sexual Assault Coalition
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NDVSAC is a proud member agency of the Community Services Fund. Learn more at: www.communityservicesfund.org

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Mark Your Calendar

Upcoming Events in Nebraska

February

- TBA Regional Training: Reaching & Teaching Teens, Grand Island, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 8 Social Order, Marginalization and Generational Abuse, Lincoln, Nebraska African American Domestic Violence Action Committee (NAADVAC), Family Violence Council, 402-489-9292
- 9 Network Legislative Update Day, Lincoln, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 11 Consortium Meeting - Sexual Assault Focus, Grand Island, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 15 Regional Training: Reaching & Teaching Teens, Ogallala, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 16 Regional Attorney Training (LAPTOP), Papillion, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 17 Regional Attorney Training (LAPTOP), Lincoln, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 18 Regional Training: Reaching & Teaching Teens, Lincoln, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 22 Regional Attorney Training (LAPTOP), Hastings, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 22 Regional Training: Reaching & Teaching Teens, Norfolk, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 23-25 Fundamentals of Advocacy Part I, Lincoln, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256

March

- 3-4 A Collaborative Victim – Centered Response to Abuse in Later Life, Fremont, Attorney General's Office, 402-471-3833
- 3-4 Director's Days, Grand Island, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 5 NDVSAC Board of Directors Meeting, Grand Island, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 10 Outreach to Rural and Underserved Communities, Grand Island, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 11 Cultural Outreach Meeting, Grand Island, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 15-17 Fundamentals of Advocacy Part II, Lincoln, NDVSAC, 402-476-6256
- 21-25 SANE Training, Grand Island, Crisis Center, 308-382-8250