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WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE



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PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT



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WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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Monitor Report:

Dane County Advocates
for Battered Women
Emergency Shelter Facility

WCCJ Subgrant #77-13M-SC-04-7

by

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ACQUISITIONS

Introduction

In June 1978 the Dane County Advocates for Battered Women (DCABW) received funds from the Wisconsin Council on Criminal Justice (WCCJ) to support an Emergency Shelter Facility for battered women. Federal funds totaling \$40,000 were awarded to help finance the Shelter from July 1, 1978 through June 30, 1979. Shelter operations actually began three months earlier on April 10, 1978. Initial operating funds were received from several other sources including the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), the United Way, the City of Madison, local social service agencies, other state and federal sources, and personal contributions. Due to the availability of these funds during the project's early operation, the grant period of the WCCJ award was adjusted to be November 1, 1978 through October 31, 1979.

Funds from sources other than the WCCJ continue to be available to help finance the Shelter. Since the Shelter costs (including counselor salaries, excluding administration costs) average approximately \$10,000 per month, funds from several sources seem to be required in order to maintain Shelter services. According to DCABW staff, the need for WCCJ funds stems from a decrease in the availability of funds from other sources, particularly CETA, and from a desire to increase the types of services the Shelter can provide. WCCJ funds currently finance a major portion of the salaries of two positions and the majority of the operational costs of the Shelter. DCABW is presently applying for \$36,831 in federal funds from Program 5 - Victim Services of the 1979 WCCJ Criminal Justice Improvement Plan to finance the Shelter operation for a second year.

Assessment Methodology and Constraints

This report is based on information gathered by Program Evaluation Section (PES) staff through interviews with DCABW staff and through a review of a sample of resident case files. Informal interviews were conducted with the Program Coordinator, Financial Officer, Shelter staff, and one Shelter resident who volunteered to talk with the evaluation team. PES compiled data from a representative sample of 51 case files drawn systematically from the Shelter's alphabetical files. In addition to information from these sources, a limited amount of summary data compiled by DCABW staff from sources other than the individual case files is also presented in this report.

The organizational structure and some of the operational procedures of DCABW are currently undergoing a transition. The changes being made should improve the record keeping and administrative efficiency of the organization. Since the beginning of January 1979 the DCABW Director's position has been vacant. That position will be filled on May 1, 1979. The organizational structure of the DCABW will soon be changed to separate the activities of Shelter support staff from the activities of other DCABW staff. The record keeping system is currently being changed to enable faster and more consistent statistical summaries to be provided and more useful individual

records to be maintained. The latter two changes appear to be the result of the learning experience gained through operating the Shelter for one year. The problems which have inspired these changes, however, have limited the extent of this review of the project's activities. The lack of complete and consistent client records, in particular, has hampered this assessment. The data and other information available are presented in the following sections of this report: Shelter Clients, Shelter Services, and Outcome of Shelter Services.

Shelter Clients

Between April 10, 1978 and March 31, 1979, essentially the first year of the Shelter's operation, the Shelter housed 160 women and their 240 children. Of these women, DCABW summary statistics indicate that 47% were under age 30 and 84% were under age 40. In the sample of cases examined by PES, the age of the women residents ranged from 18 to 56 and averaged 29. Of the sample, 81% were white, 11% black, and 8% other minorities. Of the 51 women in the sample, 42 (82%) had children with them in the Shelter. These 42 women had an average of two children with them; 40% of the children were age three or under, 92% of the children were age twelve or under. Of clients in the sample, sixteen were employed (33.3% of those with information present), and 24 were receiving public assistance (49% of those with information present).

The most common referral sources of women in the sample were social service agencies, law enforcement agencies, and personal friends. Of the 51 women in the sample, nineteen (37%) were judged to have injuries at the time of their admission to the Shelter. From the information in the files, it appears that five of these nineteen had "serious" injuries that probably would have necessitated medical attention. According to the summary statistics provided by DCABW, 49.3% of women admitted to the Shelter in the first year had injuries at the time of their admission. While the latter percentage is considerably higher than the same category for the case sample, it may be more accurate because its source may be more accurate. In the sample files "no injury" could not be distinguished from "no information"; thus, missing data may have been interpreted as "no injury."

Shelter Services

The primary need of women admitted to the Shelter is temporary shelter. This need is perceived and described by the women in the sampled cases as a need for safety, time to think or rest, or simply as "shelter." The Emergency Shelter Facility provided to meet this need is a large house in the City of Madison. It has sleeping quarters on two upper floors and a common living area on the first floor. The common area includes a living room, dining room, children's playroom, kitchen, and bath. The first floor also houses the Shelter office which contains the crisis line

phone as well as office facilities for the Shelter staff. The Shelter has facilities for eight women residents and their children. Women may stay at the Shelter for a maximum of 30 days, although this limit has been exceeded in a few rare cases.

The Shelter is operated much like a cooperative housing facility. The residents must follow the Shelter's rules and regulations, share the work of maintaining the Shelter, and largely care for their own needs and the needs of their families. A nightly resident meeting is held to plan the distribution of work and to deal with any problems that arise. None of the Shelter staff lives in the facility but 24-hour a day staff services are provided.

Aside from the primary need for temporary shelter, common needs identified by clients upon admission to the Shelter are counseling, a new living situation, legal assistance, and financial assistance. Aside from the temporary shelter provided by the project, DCABW staff list their services as crisis intervention, counseling, information and referral, and advocacy. Crisis intervention may be considered a generic service including all of the other services provided. Counseling services consist of short-term individual counseling provided as needed and weekly "support group" meetings available to both interested residents and ex-residents. Information and referral, and advocacy are similar services in terms of effect. The need for information and referral stems from the perceived needs of Shelter residents for housing, legal, and financial assistance. Since these services can often be best provided by other agencies, referrals to such agencies are made while project staff continue to offer support and assistance to the residents by following through on whatever is required of them. Each resident of the Shelter is assigned an advocate who assists her in securing assistance and services from other agencies. Of the sample files examined, 40 (95%) of the 42 residents for which the information was present were referred to other agencies. As many as five separate referrals were made for some clients. The largest number of referrals were made for legal services, with 27 of the 42 women from the sample being referred for divorce or prosecution information or other legal assistance. Of the 42 women, 20 were referred for financial assistance, the second largest referral category.

Outcome of Shelter Services

It would be difficult to assess or even define many of the desired outcomes of this project. Impact upon the criminal justice system or even a "victim service system" would have to be a fairly long-range goal. Most of the desired intermediate outcomes would have to be client focused and would have to be defined differently for each Shelter client according to her own perceptions of her needs and their fulfillment. In fact, it is beyond the scope of this review and beyond capacity of the available data to examine any but the most immediate project outcomes.

The project objectives, as listed in the first year grant application to the WCCJ, only specified activities to be performed by DCABW in implementing and operating the Shelter. The only measurable expectation indicated was that the Shelter would serve 72 women and their children in a one-year period. This expectation has been exceeded through the provision of shelter services to more than twice that number of women (160). For the sample cases examined by PES, the average length of stay in the Shelter was 11.2 days. Since this average should be representative of the average for the total population of Shelter residents during the first year, the number of client days (160 x 11.2) can be divided by the Shelter capacity (eight women) and compared to the number of days at risk (355) to determine the approximate average capacity of the Shelter over the period of the first year (4/10/78 to 3/31/79). By computing $(160 \times 11.2) / 8$ and dividing by 355, the average capacity for that period is shown to be 63%. It is clear from these figures that the shelter is being utilized fairly extensively.

Project outcomes beyond the question of utilization of the services are more difficult to detect and interpret. Some consistent data are available in the sample files on the types of living situations clients entered upon leaving the Shelter. Of the 51 sample cases, seventeen (33%) residents went "home", usually back with their spouses; eleven (21%) went to live with a friend or relative; eighteen (35%) went into an independent living situation; and five either went into some other situation or the data were unclear. Of the 29 women who either went to live with a friend or relative, or into an independent living situation, 27 (53% of the total sample) were entering a living situation that was different from the one from which they came before entering the Shelter.

Shelter staff attempt to conduct a brief follow-up interview with ex-residents three months after they leave the Shelter. Unfortunately, only 20 of the 51 sample case files had any follow-up information and some of that was unclear. It appeared that thirteen of these 20 women were living as planned with no difficulties. The other seven were either in a different living situation than planned or were having some difficulties. Those women reached for follow-up cannot be considered representative of all ex-residents. These limited follow-up findings are presented only for information and should not be considered typical of all clients.

Client Cost

It is not possible to assign a monetary value to the benefits derived from the Shelter and its staff services, nor are there comparable services available to which Shelter costs can be compared. It is possible, however, to derive a cost per client estimate from the available data which can be compared to other residential facility costs. By adding the Shelter's operational

costs for the period 4/10/78 to 3/31/79 to the estimated Shelter staff costs for that period (based on DCABW's estimate of the portion of staff time devoted to serving Shelter residents), the total Shelter costs for the period are \$119,452.63. Dividing this cost by the number of client days discussed in the previous section (160 x 11.2), yields a cost per woman (family) per day of \$66.66. Dividing the cost by the number of total resident days, which includes the 240 children housed in the Shelter ((160 + 240) x 11.2) yields a cost per resident per day of \$26.66.

This daily cost per resident is similar to daily resident costs for juvenile Shelter Care Facilities. In the WCCJ evaluation report: WCCJ-Funded Shelter Care Projects, A Program Assessment (unpublished), the average daily cost for residential care in Shelter Care Facilities in Eau Claire, Walworth, and Wood Counties was reported to be \$31.27. This daily client cost is comparable in some ways to the daily cost for the DCABW facility since the juvenile facilities were all eight-bed facilities, their costs combined operating expenses and counseling staff costs, and (by coincidence) their average capacity was 63%. If a straightforward comparison of costs could be made, the DCABW daily cost of \$26.66 per resident would seem notably less than that for the juvenile facilities. A confounding factor, however, is that the DCABW Shelter residents do not all require the same level or range of services. Most notably, the children in the Shelter usually require fewer services from the Shelter staff because their mothers are there to care for them. Because of this fact, the daily resident costs for these different types of facilities cannot be considered entirely comparable.

Conclusion

The DCABW Emergency Shelter Facility provides temporary shelter to women and their children who need this service. In the first year of operation, 400 women and children have utilized the Shelter. The average occupancy of the Shelter during its first year of operation has been 63% of its capacity. The average daily cost per resident has been \$26.66.

The immediate objective of the project, to provide a Shelter for battered women, has been accomplished. The extensive utilization of the Shelter indicates that there is a need for such a resource in the community. While slightly less than one-half of the women admitted to the Shelter have injuries at that time, many appear to have been abused physically in the past or to have suffered from emotional abuse. DCABW statistics also indicate that 23% of the children entering the Shelter have been abused in some way.

Project outcomes beyond the extent of the utilization of the Shelter are difficult to assess. The fact that 53% of the women leaving the Shelter went into a new living situation may indicate, however, that the availability of the Shelter is one factor which enables battered women to make some change in their lives.

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