DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, 1978

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILD AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN-RESOURCES

UNITED STATES SENATE

NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND LEGISLATION WITH RESPECT TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

LOS ANGELES, CALI MARCH 4, 1978 WASHINGTON, D.C. MARCH 8, 1978

Printed for the use of the Committee on Human Resources





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(11)

CONTENTS

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF WITNESSES

MARCH 4, 1978

LOS ANGELES, CALIF.	Page
Presley, Hon. Robert, a senator from the California State Legislature Stephens, Betty J., chairperson, California Commission on Status of Women	3 5
Dales, Alyce M., former victim of spouse abuse, Laguna Beach, Calif Y'Barra, Hon. Steve, assistant to the secretary, Department of Health and Welfare, State of California, accompanied by Benton Clark, chief, protec- tive services section; and Joyce Paomer, child protective services, De- partment of Health and Welfare	11
Waters, Hon. Maxine, assemblywoman, California State Legislature————————————————————————————————————	29 32
Fili, Sabrina, board of directors, YWCA	71 72
Back, Susan Malone, Ph. D., Director, HEW Services to Battered Women Project, Denver, Colo.; Marilynne Brandon Hampton, sociologist, University of California, Riverside, president, Riverside County Coalition for Alternatives to Domestic Violence, Riverside, Calif.; and Barbara Star, Ph. D., school of social work, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Calif.	87.
Muniz, Diane, director, East Los Angeles Hotline, Inc., Los Angeles, Calif., Sue Martin and Bea Robinson, Women's Alliance (WOMA) San Jose, Calif.; Barrie Levy, coordinator, Southern California Coalition on Battered Women, Santa Monica, Calif.; and Nancy Clinch, California Coalition Against Domestic Violence, San Diego, Calif., a panel	151 162
March 8, 1978	
WASHINGTON, D.C.	
Kennedy, Hon. Edward M., a U.S. Senator from the State of Massachusetts	167
Anderson, Hon. Wendell R., a U.S. Senator from the State of Minnesota Mikulski, Hon. Barbara A., a Representative in Congress from the State of Maryland	170 178
Steers, Hon. Newton I., Jr., a Representative in Congress from the State of Maryland	186
Barnett, Hon. Wallace, a senator from the Nebraska State Legislature	196

(m)

Davoren, Elizabeth, social worker consultant, family issues, National Association of Social Workers; Sara-Ann Determan, Esq., cochairperson, Committee on Rights of Women, Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities, American Bar Association; Ira S. Lourie, M.D., American Psychiatric Association; Suzanne K. Steinmetz, Ph. D., University of Delaware, representing the Coalition of Family Organizations; Bonnie Tinker, chairperson, Steering Committee, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Portland, Org.; and Hon. Suzanne B. Wilson, vice mayor, San Jose, Calif., chair, Public Safety Policy Committee, National League of Cities, a panel	Page 268 350 352 468	
STATEMENTS		
American Bar Association, Sara-Ann Determan, co-chairperson, committee on rights of women, section of individual rights and responsibilities pre-		10 gr.
pared statementsAmerican Psychiatric Association, Ira S. Lourie, M.D., representing, prepared statements	279 - 285 170	300
Anderson, Hon. Wendell R., a U.S. Senator from the State of Minnesota		300%
Prepared statementBack, Susan Malone, Ph. D., Director, HEW Services to Battered Women	173	
Project, Denver, Colo.; Marilynne Brandon Hampton, sociologist, University of California, Riverside, president, Riverside County Coalition for Alternatives to Domestic Violence, Riverside, Calif.; and Barbara Star, Ph. D., school of social work, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Calif.	87	
Prepared statementBarnett, Hon. Wallace, a senator from the Nebraska State Legislature	96 196	
Prepared statement	199	:
Beardslee, Cheryl, staff member, Women's Advocates, St. Paul, Minn., Jennifer Fleming, director, Women's Resource Network, Philadephia,		in the same of the
Pa.; Hon. Kathleen M. Fojtik, commissioner, board of commissioners, Washtenaw County, coordinator, Domestic Violence Project, Inc., Ann	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	\
Arbor, Mich.; Curdina Hill, vice president, Casa Myrna Vazquez, Boston, Mass.; Sandy Ramos, executive director, Shelter Our Sisters, Hack-		1
ensack, N.J.; and James C. Walsh, A.C.S.W., C.S.W., executive director, Victims Information Bureau of Suffolk, Inc., Suffolk County, N.Y., a		-1
panel	352 66	510
Prepared statementsBlackhall, Edith, program administrator, child protection program, Mil-	355	$\int_{\mathbb{R}^{n}}$
waukee, Wis	468	V ⊘.,
California Commission on Status of Women, Betty J. Stephens, chairperson, prepared statements	8	
Cardenas, Hon. Blandina Commissioner, Administration for Children, Youth and Families; and Hon. Gerald R. Klerman, M.D., Administrator,		
Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration, Department of	941	
Health, Education, and WelfarePrepared statement	$\begin{array}{c} 241 \\ 250 \end{array}$	
Prepared statement Chandler, Margrit, Huntington Beach, Calif Citizens, Against Spansel Assembly Howard County, Md. prepared states	162	
Citizens Against Spousal Assault, Howard County, Md., prepared statement	691	
Dales, Alyce M., former victim of spouse abuse, Laguna Beach, Calif	11	

Davoren, Elizabeth, social worker consultant, family issues, National Association of Social Workers: Sara-Ann Determon Fig.		
sociation of Social Workers; Sara-Ann Determan, Esq., cochairperson, Committee on Rights of Women Section of Individual, Cochairperson,	• *	
Committee on Rights of Women, Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities, American Bar Association: Iro S.		
sponsibilities. American Roy Association of Individual Rights and Re-		
ican Psychiatric Association; Ira S. Lourie, M.D., Amer-		
ican Psychiatric Association; Suzanne K. Steinmetz, Ph. D., University of Delaware, representing the Coalities of Delaware.		
versity of Delaware, representing the Coalition of Family Organiza- tions; Bonnie Tinker, chairperson Steering Committee Coalition		
tions; Bonnie Tinker, chairperson, Steering Committee, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Portland, Organization and		
tion Against Domestic Violence, Portland, Oreg.; and Hon. Suzanne B. Wilson, vice mayor, San Jose, Calif. chair Public Science.		
Wilson, vice mayor, San Jose, Calif., chair, Public Safety Policy Committee, National League of Cities, a panel	~	
mittee, National League of Cities, a panel Domestic Violence Project, Inc. Ann. Arbor, Med.		
Domestic Violence Project, Inc., Ann Arbor, Mich. Works	268	
Domestic Violence Project, Inc., Ann Arbor, Mich., Kathleen M. Fojtik, director, prepared statement East Los Angeles Hotline, Inc., Diana Munic director.		
East Los Angeles Hotling Inc. Di	382	
Emergency Shelter Program In It in thing, director, prepared statement	160	
tive director, propagation, radia, value, Joann Levils, executive	200	. 0
Fili. Sabring hourd of disastement	46 to	$\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{O}}^{\omega}$
Fili, Sabrina, board of directors, YWCA Harriet, a battered wife, St. Paul. Minn		
Harriet, a battered wife, St. Paul, Minn International Association of Chiefs of Police Clark	71	
International Association of Chiefs of Police, Glen R. Murphy, director, Bureau of Governmental Relations and logal course.	350 /	
Bureau of Governmental Relations and legal counsel, prepared statement Kennedy, Hon. Edward M., a U.S. Senator from the Statement	and 1500	/_
Kennedy, Hon. Edward M., a U.S. Senator from the State of Massachusetts_	640 <i>655</i> 7	64
Prepared statement	167	
	167	
Mental Health Administration Department, Alcohol, Drug Abuse and		
Mental Health Administration, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, prepared statement Langley, Roger, and Richard C. Levy, co-authors of "Wife Beating: The Silent Crisis", prepared statement		
Langley, Roger and Richard C. T.	260	
Silent Crisis", prepared statement LeFils, JoAnn. executive director.	-00	
LeFils, JoAnn, executive director, Emergency Shelter Program, Inc., Hayward, Calif.; Beverly Monasmith, director, Rosesbaren, N. H.	470	
ward Calif. Recentive director, Emergency Shelter Program Inc. Hay	410	
ward, Calif.; Beverly Monasmith, director, Rosasharon, North Holly- wood, Calif.; and Susan Naples, Women's Transition, North Holly-		
wood, Calif.; and Susan Naples, Women's Transitional Living Center,		
Orange, Calif Women's Transitional Living Center, Prepared statement		
Prepared statement Los Angeles County Commission on the Status of Western County Commission on the Status of Western County Commission on the Status of Western County County Commission on the Status of Western County C	32	
Los Angeles County Commission on the Status of Women. Beverly Polok- off, committee chair, Ad Hoc Committee on Potter IV	46	
off, committee chair, Ad Hoc Committee on Potter of Botton of the Beverly Polok-		
Statement Statement Dattered Women prepared		
Merritt, Kenneth A psychologist 3:	674	
Bureau, prepared statement Mikulski, Hon Barbara A Brand Family Services		
Mikulski, Hon. Barbara A., a Representative in Congress from the State of Maryland	63	
of Maryland and A., a Representative in Congress from the State	OD.	
Prepared statementMuniz, Diane, director, East Los Angeles Hotling Inc. Los Angeles Hotli	170	
Muniz Diana divasta E	178	
Muniz, Diane, director, East Los Angeles Hotline, Inc., Los Angeles, Calif.; Sue Martin and Bea Robinson, Women's Alliance (WOM)	181	
Sue Martin and Bea Robinson, Women's Alliance (WOMA) San Jose, Calif.: Barrie Levy, coordinator, Southern California Galifornia Gali		
Calif.: Barrie Levy, coordinator. Southern California Coalition on Battered Women, Santa Monica, Calif.: and Nanor Clinch. California Coalition on Bat-		
tered Women, Santa Monica, Calif.; and Nancy Clinch, California Coalition on Battion Against Domestic Violence, San Diego, Calif.		ř
tion Against Domestic Violence, San Diego Colif. Camornia Coali-	C	4
tion Against Domestic Violence, San Diego, Calif., a panel	151 e 🐧	
	160	1
National Association of Social Workers, Inc., Elizabeth Davoren, social worker consultant, prepared statement National League of Cities, Susanne B. Wilson, vice mayor, San Jose, Calif., on behalf of, prepared statement	1	
National League of Cities Sugaring B.	271 65506	. 1
on behalf of, prepared statement, witson, vice mayor, San Jose, Calif.		
Ticoley, Filli, Robert o constant	339 65509	> 4
Rosasharon, Inc., North Hollywood, Calif., Beverly Monasmith, director, prepared statement	. \ /	1
tor, prepared statement Hollywood, Calif., Beverly Monasmith, direc-	3	. 1.
Soccio, Ling donother and the statement	أحاج أحج	Os 🖑
Soccio, Lina, deputy probation officer, adult probation. Riverside County, Riverside, Calif.; and Frederick H. Samuels assists.	55 7 P	1
Riverside, Calif.; and Frederick H. Samuels, assistant unit supervisor,	4	
California Department of Correction, parole and community services division, Riverside, Calif		
division, Riverside Colif		
Prenared statement	72	1/3
Olar, Barbara Dh. D. achara a	81	- 14
Iornia, Los Angoles Golie - South Work, University of Southern Cali.		17
Steers, Hon. Newton L. Ir. Bonnestatement	48	F.
of Marviand		and the
Prepared stotomone	0.0	1
Prepared statement Stephens, Betty J., chairperson, California Commission 18	36 20	14
Stephens, Betty J., chairperson, California Commission on Status of	38 \sqrt{8}	11
Women Chairperson, California Commission on Status of Prepared statement	13.5	Ä
Prepared statement University of Delaware, Suzanne K Steinmetz, Ph. D.	5γ	#
University of Delaware Sugara	8 /	- 11
family studies, prepared statement.	<i></i>	- H
30	865508	9
	10000	÷1

Victims Information Bureau of Suffolk, James C. Walsh, A.C.S.W., C.S.W.,	Page	
executive director, prepared statement	447	
Waters, Hon. Maxine, assemblywoman, California State Legislature	29	
Women's Advocates, St. Paul, Minn., Cheryl Beardslee, staff member, pre-		
pared statement	355	
Women's Resource Network, Philadelphia, Pa., Jennifer Fleming, director,		
prepared statement	366	
Y'Barra, Hon. Steve, assistant to the secretary, Department of Health and	, 000	
Welfare, State of California, accompanied by Benton Clark, chief, pro-		
tective services section; and Joyce Paomer, child protective services,		
Department of Health and Welfare	12	
Prepared statement	18	
Frepared statement	10	
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION		
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION		
Articles, publications, etc.:		
Assault Crisis Center, statistical information on domestic violence	389	
Battered Wives: Help for the Victim Next Door, by Marcia Rockwood,	000	1
from Ms. Gazette	656	
Detroid Women and Children Conference wenner to from the New	090	
Battered Women and Children Conference, report on, from the New		
Mexico Commission on the Status of Women and Bureau of Indian	207	
Affairs, Albuquerque, N. Mex	697	
Blaming the Victim: Parallels in Crimes Against Women-Rape and		
Battering, by Mildred Daley Pagelow, sociology department, Univer-		
sity of California, Riverside, Calif	608	
Battered Women: A New Perspective, by Mildred Daley Pagelow,		
sociology department, University of California, Riverside, Calif	521	
California Penal Code, excerpt from	75	
Domestic Violence: the hidden crime, by the Assault Crisis Center,		
Ann Arbor, Mich	421	
Domestic Violence Project: a summary of the project's organization		
and activities, by Susan Wallendorf, volunteer	398	
How I Stopped Beating My Wife, Interview with Bill M., by Ann Gera-	000	
cimos, from Ms. Gazette	653	
Most American Violence Happens in the Home, "One of These Days—	000	
POW Right in the Kisser," by Judith Gingold, from Ms. Gazette	651 A	1
Phenomenon of the Abused Adolescent: A Clinical Study, by Ira S.	OOT IN) ' · ·
	· η	
Lourie, M.D., from Victimology: An International Journal, vol. II,	00= /	
No 2, summer 1977	295	
Preliminary Report on Battered Women, by Mildred Daley Pagelow,	وسرام بالمال	-, ,
sociology department, University of California, Riverside, Calif	555 6বর্ত্ত	//
Safe House: A Nonviolence Milestone, from the Ann Arbor News,		
November 15, 1977	397	
Secondary Battering: Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence, by Mil-		
dred Daley Pagelow, sociology department, University of California,		
Riverside, CalifShelter Services for Battered Wives, from the Ann Arbor News, No-	484	
Shelter Services for Battered Wives, from the Ann Arbor News, No-		
vember 7, 1977	396	
Spouse Abuse: Couples in Conflict, by the VIBS Counseling Center,		
Hauppauge. N.Y.	458	
Unforgettable Letters from Battered Wives, from the Ms. Gazette,	100	
December 1976	647	
Women Alive! A License for Violence, a Chiswick Women's Aid Film,	UII	
introduction, analysis and commentary by Gloria Steinem	660	
Women's Resource Network: A National Resource in Response to Fam-	UUU	
women a resource werwork. A manional resource in response to Fain-		



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TESTIMONY

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILD AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Committee on Human Resources

March 8, 1978

IRA S. LOURIE, M. D. AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

GOOD MORNING.

My name is Dr. Ira S. Lourie, and I am appearing here today on behalf of the American Psychiatric Association, a medical specialty society with a membership of over 24,000 psychiatrists representing a cross section of those practicing psychiatry, ranging from the academic to the administrator to the individual in community, public health service or private practice throughout the United States.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION STATE OUR DEDICATION NOT ONLY TO IMPROVING THE TREATMENT, REHABILITATION AND CARE OF THE MENTALLY ILL, BUT ALSO OUR DEDICATION TO ADVANCING THE STANDARDS OF ALL PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES AND TO COOPERATE WITH ALL WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH OTHER MEDICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS. THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR TODAY IS VERY MUCH IN KEEPING WITH THE APA'S OBJECTIVES, AND WE THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN, FOR ALLOWING US TO PROVIDE OUR INPUT ON THE MOST SERIOUS MATTER OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

I MUST POINT OUT BEFORE BEGINNING TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE THAT WHILE

I AM AN EMPLOYEE OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH, MY PRESENCE
HERE TODAY IS IN ANOTHER CAPACITY. I AM APPEARING ON BEHALF OF THE APA
AND THE VIEWS I PROPOUND ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF EITHER NIMH OR
ADAMHA.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE -- AN OVERVIEW

THIS NATION OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS, HAS BEGUN TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ISSUE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE -- CHILD ABUSE, ADOLESCENT ABUSE AND SPOUSE ABUSE. WE DID NOT KNOW THEN WHAT WE KNOW NOW: THAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOT CLASS OR CULTURE BOUND; THAT CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE ARE NOT THE PREDOMINANT VICTIMS OF ABUSE; THAT ABUSE UNREPORTED DOES NOT MEAN THAT ABUSE IS NOT PRESENT.

FIRST, ATTENTION WAS FOCUSED ON CHILD ABUSE, AND TODAY THERE ARE MANY EFFORTS AD THE STATE, FEDERAL AND LOCAL LEVELS TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM. WHEREAS THE ISSUE WAS FIRST CONSIDERED A LEGAL ONE, TODAY WE HAVE COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT CHILD ABUSE -- AND INDEED ADOLESCENT AND SPOUSE ABUSE AS WELL -- ARE THE RESULT OF ABERRANT FAMILY PROCESS WITH PHYSICAL, PSYCHIATRIC, SOCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS BOTH FOR THE FAMILY ITSELF AND SOCIETY AT LARGE. AS WE HAVE LEARNED MORE ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE, SO, TOO, HAVE WE SOUGHT MEANS OF BRINGING A HALT TO ABUSE. SERVICE PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED WITH A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN WHICH VARIOUS PROFESSIONALS AND NONPROFESSIONALS WITHIN A COMMUNITY HAVE COME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT FAMILIES IN WHICH THERE IS A CHILD AT RISK. THE MEDICAL, LEGAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMUNITIES HAVE COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT REMOVING AN ABUSED CHILD FROM THE HOME IS NOT NECESSARILY THE MOST PREFERABLE MEANS OF ENDING ABUSIVE TREATMENT. SERVICE PROGRAMS HAVE HAD AS AN OBJECTIVE THAT OF KEEPING FAMILIES INTACT, THROUGH COUNSELING OR OTHER SUPPORTIVE MEDICAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES, RATHER THAN RELYING ON

INVOLUNTARY PLACEMENT OF ABUSED CHILDREN THROUGH THE SOCIAL WELFARE OR

COURT SYSTEMS.

As an outgrowth of this new attention being paid to child abuse has come the recognition that infants are not those who are predominantly abused. Rather, abuse affects all children of all ages at approximately equal rates. Moreover, we have learned that spouse abuse, both against wives and husbands, is widespread, though far less frequently reported than incidences of child or adolescent abuse.

RECENT RESEARCH IS DEMONSTRATING THAT THE PATTERNS OF ABUSE ARE

NOT THE SAME AMONG VARIOUS AGE GROUPS OF ABUSED CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS

AND ADULTS. INDEED, WITHIN THE POPULATION OF ADOLESCENTS ABUSED

(APPROXIMATELY TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF ALL VALIDATED ABUSE CASES) IT HAS

BEEN DISCOVERED THAT THE CAUSES AND NATURE OF ABUSE, WHILE PARALLELING

ABUSE OF THE VERY YOUNG IN SOME WAYS, ARE IN MANY WAYS DIFFERENT, THAT

IS TO SAY, THE FAMILY PRESSURES GIVING RISE TO THE ABUSE VARY GREATLY.

DATA, UNFORTUNATELY, ARE INCOMPLETE, BECAUSE WHILE ADOLESCENTS TO AGE

EIGHTEEN ARE COVERED UNDER CHILD ABUSE PROTECTION SYSTEMS, THE SYSTEMS

HAVE NOT DEVELOPED THE CAPACITY TO DEAL ADEQUATELY WITH THE DIFFERENT

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM. RECENT LIMITED EFFORTS HAVE RESULTED IN THE

GROWING RECOGNITION OF THIS PROBLEM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PILOT PROGRAMS.

Most recently, the plight of the battered or abused spouse has come to national attention. Unlike the area of child abuse, there is no extant reporting system for medical cases in which abuse is suspected or validated, and unlike the area of child abuse, a system of multidisciplinary case management has not been instituted. Unlike children, or even adolescents, spouses have no legal protection against abuse. What we do have are local "havens" for the abused spouse. These are few

AND FAR BETWEEN WITH LITTLE COMMUNITY SUPPORT -- BE IT MONEY,
PSYCHIATRIC, MEDICAL, SOCIAL OR LEGAL COUNSELING, OR OTHER SERVICES.

THE DATA ARE SO SKETCHY, AND THE RESEARCH SO LIMITED THAT THE
PHENOMENON IS NOT WELL UNDERSTOOD BY ANYONE IN THE COMMUNITY OF PROFESSIONALS, PARAPROFESSIONALS AND NONPROFESSIONALS ATTEMPTING TO DEAL
WITH THE PROBLEM.

THE ROLE OF PSYCHIATRY IN CURBING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

THERE ARE THREE MAJOR AREAS IN WHICH THE PSYCHIATRIST -- AS A PHYSICIAN AND AS A SPECIALIST IN MENTAL ILLNESS -- HAS-BEEN AND MUST CONTINUE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE AREA OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. I REFER HERE TO SERVICE PROGRAMS FOR THE ABUSED AND ABUSIVE, RESEARCH AND TRAINING.

THE PSYCHIATRIST, TODAY OFTEN THE CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIST, HAS BEEN A PART OF THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS NOW WORKING IN THE AREA OF DOMESTIC. VIOLENCE. HIS OR HER PRESENCE AS PART OF SUCH A TEAM-ADDS TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF FAMILY DYNAMICS, CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND WHEN APPROPRIATE, PSYCHO-PATHOLOGY, ALL OF WHICH CAN HELP INSURE THE MOST BENEFICIAL CASE MANAGEMENT, AND ULTIMATELY THE END OF ABUSE IN A PARTICULAR FAMILY. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PSYCHIATRIST CAN ASSESS THE NEED FOR PSYCHIATRIC THERAPY FOR ANY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY IN WHICH ABUSE IS PRESENT. HE OR SHE CAN WEIGH THE EFFECTS OF VARIOUS INTERVENTION OPTIONS ON THE FAMILY, THEREBY HELPING TO DETERMINE WHETHER A FAMILY IS BEST ENCOURAGED TO REMAIN INTACT, WHETHER A SEPARATION IS PREFERABLE, OR WHETHER THE CASE SHOULD BE EVALUATED BY THE CORRECTIONS SYSTEM. LAST, HE OR SHE CAN ASSESS SPECIFIC DYNAMICS OF FAMILIES WITH A HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITH AN EYE TOWARD DEVELOPING AN ETIOLOGY OF ABUSE.

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WITHIN THE AREA OF RESEARCH, THE PSYCHIATRIST CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE, WHETHER THE RESEARCH IS ON AN AD HOC BASIS OR UNDER OTHER FEDERAL OR OTHER SUBSIDY, BY BRINGING HIS OR HER KNOWLEDGE OF RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE, FAMILY DYNAMICS, CHILD DEVELOPMENT TO BEAR ON THE SPECIFIC QUESTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. HE ADDRESSES BOTH THE ABUSED AND ABUSIVE WITH AN EYE TOWARD CULLING COMMON DENOMINATORS FROM THE COMPLEX SERIES OF TRIGGER SITUATIONS WHICH MAY RESULT IN FAMILY VIOLENCE.

THE PSYCHIATRIST CAN FURTHER HELP TRAIN OTHER PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS, INCLUDING LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL, IN THE PSYCHIATRIC ASPECTS OF INTERVENTION IN FAMILY CRISIS SITUATIONS.

Today, however, the ability of the psychiatrist or other professionals working in the area of domestic violence is severely-limited. These limitations are the result of insufficient research, insufficient funds and, until today, insufficient national interest in family violence other than child abuse.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO AFFECT CHANGES IN FAMILY VIOLENCE

BASED IN LARGE MEASURE ON MY INVOLVEMENT IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT ABUSE, IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT FOUR MAJOR NEEDS ARE LACKING IN OUR EFFORTS TO CURB DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: SERVICE POTENTIAL, TRAINING OF PERSONNEL, BASIC RESEARCH AND THE FUNDS NECESSARY TO MEET THE THREE OTHER NEEDS.

IT IS NECESSARY TO PROVIDE INCREASED SERVICE POTENTIAL TO ALL GROUPS OF ABUSED PERSONS, PAYING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE DISPARATE NEEDS AND TREATMENT TECHNOLOGIES FOR EACH GROUP. THERE ARE ALREADY SUCCESSFUL

MODELS WHICH HAVE BEEN OR ARE BEING DEVELOPED ON THE LOCAL, STATE AND REGIONAL LEVELS WHICH, AS DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS COULD PROVIDE MODELS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS AND INCREASED IMPETUS TO THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS NOW WORKING IN THIS AREA. EACH MODEL ALSO PROVIDES POTENTIAL FOR BASIC RESEARCH INTO THE ETIOLOGY OF THE VARIOUS KINDS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE -- CHILD ABUSE, ADOLESCENT ABUSE AND SPOUSE ABUSE -- WHICH WILL RESULT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPROPRIATE SERVICES TO MEET THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF EACH GROUP AND THE FAMILIES OF THOSE ABUSED.

AS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE POTENTIAL, IT IS NECESSARY
ALSO TO DEVELOP OUTREACH. WHILE THE NUMBERS OF REPORTED CASES OF
ABUSE ARE ON THE RISE, THE BATTERED SPOUSE SYNDROME, IN PARTICULAR,
HAS NOT YET BEEN SUFFICIENTLY DESTIGNATIZED TO ALLOW ITS VICTIMS TO
READILY SEEK HELP. GREATER PUBLIC EDUCATION TO SERVICES WILL BE NEEDED
AS WILL AN EFFORT TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC TO THE PHENOMENON ITSELF.

ADOLESCENTS, EVEN WHEN RECOGNIZED AS HAVING BEEN ABUSED, ARE OFTEN SEEN AS MANIPULATIVE VICTIMIZERS, AND THE ABUSE TOWARD THEM FORGIVEN. FOR EXAMPLE, AFTER SHOWING A VIDEOTAPE OF FOUR ABUSED ADOLESCENTS TO A GROUP OF JUVENILE OFFICERS, THEIR COMBINED RESPONSE WAS "BOY, WERE THOSE KIDS MANIPULATIVE". So, IT GOES WITH SPOUSE ABUSE, WHERE THE VICTIM IS SEEN AS BEEN MASOCHISTIC -- "ASKING FOR ABUSE". BEFORE EFFECTIVE SERVICE CAN BE GIVEN, THESE MYTHS MUST BE LAID TO REST.

ALONG WITH SERVICES, TRAINED PERSONNEL WILL BE NEEDED. IF PROGRAMS ARE TO BE DEVELOPED NATIONALLY, ADEQUATE STAFF TO RESEARCH, EVALUATE AND MANAGE SUCH PROGRAMS IS CRUCIAL. IN THE PAST, APPROPRIATIONS HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY SMALL TO THE PROGRAMS THAT DO EXIST IN THE AREA OF FAMILY VIOLENCE, AND QUALIFIED STAFFING HAS SUFFERED EVEN MORE SEVERELY.

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AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL, IT WOULD NOT BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR SPECIFIC
LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE TO BE INCLUDED IN ANY BILL DEALING WITH DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE MANDATING ADEQUATE TRAINING EFFORTS AND APPROPRIATE AUTHORIZATIONS
TO CARRY OUT THE TRAINING.

At this time, research in the area of family violence is perhaps the most important step which must be taken. Research in family violence today, though some headway is being made in the area of the battered spouse, predominantly has dealt with child abuse. Moreover, this research has been geared particularly to the pediatric setting -- describing abuse patterns for children under five who have been subjected to severe injury. From this, we have been able to develop a paradigm for child abuse which is biased and worked best for only the group studied. Attempts to deny this bias and to apply the results of such research across the board miss the basic differences between groups of abused persons and obscure the factors which are indeed common to all groups.

Research in family violence has suffered from categorical approaches.

Basic researchers and epidemiologists agree that the term "abuse"

Whether applied to children, adolescents or spouses, is indefinable.

These terms are legal and political. They are defined by law and are used to protect lives and assure services to groups of victimized people in need of advocacy. This is identical to the term and concept of "insanity". This concept is extremely useful in describing and determining a person's mental competence, and often for the acquisition

OF SPECIAL SERVICES FOR THAT PERSON. BUT, IF WE PRETEND THAT INSANITY IS MORE THAN THAT, WE CAN GET INTO REAL TROUBLE BECAUSE IT OVERLOOKS ALL THE MANY RELATED AND UNRELATED CONDITIONS WHICH MAY LEAD TO ONE'S BEING DECLARED "INSANE." FURTHER, CREATION OF PROGRAMS BASED ON THIS CONCEPT WOULD ULTIMATELY LEAD TO HARMFUL INSTITUTIONS BASED ON INTERNALLY CONSISTENT BUT INVALID CONCEPTS.

So it is with child abuse, adolescent abuse and spouse abuse. These are all useful terms to protect and assure services to populations in need. However, for the purposes of research they are much less useful. Research must be broader and non-categorical in nature. We must learn more about family violence in its broadest sense: the parent/child and husband/wife relationships, child development, mid-life development, adolescent transition, the effects of various kinds of stress on various types of individual, what the trigger mechanisms for violence are. Once such a broad perspective is gained, we can look at what we know about each category of abuse -- children, adolescents, spouses, within a broad framework.

ONLY WITH RESEARCH OF THIS NATURE CAN WE FIND THE COMMON THREADS

"WHY VIOLENCE, CAN WE LEARN WHETHER IT IS THE SHEER NUMBER OF

"KESSURES ON PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS WHICH TRIGGERS VIOLENCE, OR A

"PECIAL ADMIXTURE WHICH CAN BE IDENTIFIED ACROSS ALL CASES OF DOMESTIC

VIOLENCE. CATEGORICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS ENTICE US INTO NARROW RESEARCH

STUDIES WHERE, LIKE IN THE EXAMPLE OF INSANITY, PROJECTS ARE INTERNALLY

CONSISTENT, BUT BASED ON BIASED, NARROW, AND MOST LIKELY INVALID

CONCEPTS.

-9-

My favorite example of this is the oft-stated "fact" that child abusers were themselves abused as children. This "fact" is now almost universally accepted as a leading cause of child abuse. However, this statistic is based on studies of abused children. We have no conception as to how many abused children actually grow up to abuse their own children and how many grow up with a counterreaction which would cause them to reject all forms of violence against their own children. Yet, we remain "hung-up" on this fact -- and still accept its untested and doubtful significance. To avoid this, we must set up systems which encourage scientists in the broad areas of child development, adult development, family development and violence to apply their knowledge and data to abused populations.

CONCLUSION

AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE MEANS OF REDUCING OR ELIMINATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARE LIMITED -- IN PART BECAUSE NO ORGANIZED SYSTEM OF DATA COLLECTION OF THE ISSUE REALLY EXISTS, IN PART BECAUSE RESEARCH INTO THE CAUSES OF ABUSE HAVE BEEN LIMITED AND MISDIRECTED AND IN PART BECAUSE DOME: FIC VIOLENCE REMAINS A "HIDDEN" PHENOMENON, AN EMBARRASSMENT TO WHICH THE BATTERED SPOUSE, ADOLESCENT OR CHILD IS NOT OFTEN WILLING TO SUBJECT HIMSELF OR HERSELF BY SPEAKING OF IT OR "GOING PUBLIC".

AS MENTAL ILLNESS IS AN ISSUE WHICH, WITH THE EFFORTS OF THE APA AND THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON MENTAL HEALTH, HAS BEEN SLOWLY DESTIGMATIZED, SO TOO MUST FAMILY VIOLENCE. AS MENTAL ILLNESS HAS BEGUN TO BE "BROUGHT OUT OF THE CLOSET", SO, TOO, MUST FAMILY VIOLENCE. ONCE

BROUGHT OUT, RESEARCH AND SERVICES CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE TO UNDERSTAND AND THEN HELP ELIMINATE THE ROOTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. A WISE CONGRESS WILL WRESTLE WITH THE PARADOX OF NEEDING A CATEGORICAL APPROACH TO SERVICE AND A NONCATEGORICAL APPROACH TO RESEARCH, AND DEVELOP A MEANINGFUL PROGRAM WHICH CAN AND WILL ENCOMPASS BOTH.

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