



SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND SAFETY

THE CASE FOR ONSITE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES AT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AGENCIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

According to a report by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year in the U.S. an estimated 1.5 million women are physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner and approximately 500,000 women are stalked by an intimate partner.¹ Domestic violence not only acts as a barrier to education, training, and employment but also can escalate when survivors seek or participate in such activities. Abusers also interfere with efforts of women on welfare to meet program requirements. Studies on the prevalence of domestic violence estimate that 22% of women in the general population have been abused as adults; however the figure is as high as 60% for women receiving welfare, with up to 30% of this group having been abused within the past year.² Furthermore, poverty and lack of adequate income often make it even more difficult for domestic violence survivors to escape from abuse.

At the national and state levels, domestic violence survivors and their advocates increasingly are focusing on issues of poverty and economic self-sufficiency. Building economic security for battered women was the topic of the October 2002 national meeting of state coalitions against domestic violence convened by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.³ However, most employment services agencies that assist women with finding and retaining employment have limited capacity to address issues of domestic

¹ Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, "Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence," National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 2000. Accessed at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf>

² For a discussion of data and findings from a wide range of studies on the prevalence of domestic violence, its forms, and effects on the lives of low income women see, "Surviving Violence and Poverty: A Focus on the Link Between Domestic and Sexual Violence, Women's Poverty and Welfare," NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, September 18, 2002, p. 1-2. Accessed at <http://www.nowldef.org/html/issues/wel/Surviving.pdf>.

³ For further discussion of this topic, see the following National Resource Center on Domestic Violence reports: Jill Davies, "Policy Blueprint on Domestic Violence and Poverty," March 2002; Katie M. Ciorba VonDeLinde, "How Are Domestic Violence Programs Meeting the Economic Needs of Battered Women in Iowa? An Assessment and Recommendations," March 2002; and Amy Correia and Katie M. Ciorba VonDeLinde, "Integrating Anti-Poverty Work into Domestic Violence Advocacy: Iowa's Experience," October 2002. Accessed at <http://www.vawnet.org/NRCDVPublications/BCSDV/Papers/>.

violence and cannot readily attain it. With so many low-income women being mandated to participate in job readiness and placement programs, collaboration between job programs and domestic violence services agencies presents an outstanding opportunity not only to increase awareness about the ways that domestic violence acts as a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency but also to expand access to domestic violence services.

The Kraft Domestic Violence Services Project began in October 2000 and continued through the end of 2002 at sites in Chicago, Houston, and Seattle. This national demonstration project investigated how domestic violence acts as a barrier to women's training and employment and the interventions that are effective for assisting women to remain safe and employed. The Center for Impact Research (CIR) undertook the project's research component and provided technical assistance to the participating employment services agencies and domestic violence service providers. From its inception, this project was designed not only to provide direct services and build the capacity of participating agencies, but also document and share program and participant outcomes. Thus, the purposes of the project were twofold:

- To develop a collaborative model of providing domestic violence services within a job-training environment to expand access to domestic violence services for low-income victims.
- To develop a model for strengthening programs that help low-income women attain economic self-sufficiency by addressing needs of domestic violence survivors.

This report is intended to inform public policy debates about the need and benefits of offering domestic violence education and services onsite at employment services agencies. It highlights the challenges, service needs, and outcomes of low-income domestic violence survivors as they struggle to keep themselves and their children safe, become and remain employed, and attain self-sufficiency.

A second project report complements this policy report and is intended for social service practitioners.⁴ It summarizes the project learnings and best practice recommendations for integrating domestic violence services into programs and activities at employment services agencies. It discusses planning, establishing, and maintaining interagency collaborations; training of case managers; screening and referrals; and ongoing delivery of domestic violence services within the employment services setting.

During the two-year period of services:

- 1,845 people attended domestic violence educational presentations at the employment services agencies.
- 243 women completed the initial interview and received counseling services.
- 125 women completed the second interview three months after the initial interview.
- 47 women completed the third interview nine months after the initial interview.

⁴ Lise McKean, "Addressing Domestic Violence as a Barrier to Work: Building Collaborations Between Domestic Violence Service Providers and Employment Services Agencies," Center for Impact Research, October 2004. Both reports are available at <http://www.impactresearch.org/publication/publicationdate.html>.

FINDINGS

- Nearly half of the respondents reported having been abused within the past six months; three-quarters reported having been abused in the past by previous partners.
- More than half of the respondents have been physically abused by their current partner. Of those reporting current physical abuse, three-quarters report severe physical aggression. Nearly three-quarters have been physically abused in the past by a past partner.
- Emotional abuse, controlling behavior, and intimidation within the last six months were reported by approximately one-half of the women currently experiencing abuse. Nearly three-quarters of women had experienced emotional abuse, controlling behavior, and intimidation in the past by past partners.
- Nearly one-quarter of respondents experiencing current abuse reported having been sexually abused by their current partner within the past six months. Over two-fifths of all respondents reported past sexual abuse by a past partner.
- Over one-quarter of respondents experiencing current abuse reported having been stalked by their current partner within the past six months. Over one-half of all respondents reported having been stalked in the past by a past partner.
- Nearly one-half of all respondents said that they feared for their own safety because of the abuser. Over one-third said that they feared for the safety of their children.

Domestic violence interferes with employment efforts in a myriad of ways; it can involve explicit acts of violence and sabotage or more subtle forms of psychological and emotional manipulation. The domestic violence counselors at the employment services agencies provided a range of services to participants, including counseling, crisis intervention, safety planning, support groups, legal and court advocacy, and referrals to other services. More than one-half of the participants needed services related to housing, financial assistance, food and/or clothing, education, mental health, and peer group support. Most participants were in need of multiple services. In their follow-up interviews with the domestic violence counselor three and nine months after the initial interview, participants reported improvements in all aspects of their domestic violence situation.

Of the 125 respondents for the three-month follow-up interview, three-quarters were either employed or enrolled in job training or an educational program. Of the 47 respondents for the next interview six months later, slightly more than three-quarters were employed. In both interview groups, less than one-quarter of the participants were neither employed nor enrolled in a training or educational program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The stakeholders in this Kraft project—domestic violence victims, employment services agencies, and domestic violence service providers—concurred that the project accomplished its goals of empowering individuals and service providers to address domestic violence as a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency. Coordinated advocacy by workforce development agencies, domestic violence service providers, and other groups representing women and low-wage workers must continue to inform public policy at the federal, state, and local levels about the role of domestic violence as a barrier to employment.

Advocacy efforts should also publicize effective models for addressing this barrier and call for public funding for programs that can deliver effective domestic violence services at employment services agencies. In the words of one employment services agency manager: “We feel a great loss over the end of the Kraft program. It is a model that clearly works. We have a higher placement and retention rate for domestic violence victims than before the program.”

The findings of the Kraft project highlight the crucial need for ongoing response to the fact that domestic violence harms individuals, families, and communities and acts as a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency. The following are specific recommendations for public policies and social services that can help to remove this barrier.⁵

The high prevalence of domestic violence among low-income women indicates the importance of effective domestic violence screening and referrals for applicants and recipients of TANF.

- Require that all TANF applicants are screened for domestic violence by a trained provider.
- Require that all TANF recipients are screened for domestic violence by a trained provider before proceeding with sanctions.
- Do not require victims of domestic violence to participate in marriage promotion programs if it would jeopardize their own and their children’s safety.
- Provide ongoing training for TANF caseworkers on domestic violence and procedures for screening and referrals.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires states to establish One-Stop centers where individuals can access a variety of job training and job placement services in one location. Because many employment services are already consolidated at these locations, One-Stops are a practical venue for a replication of the Kraft program.⁶ Furthermore, with TANF caseworkers already located at selected

⁵ Suggestions to the recommendations were made by Rose Karasti of Chicago Jobs Council, Jody Raphael of DePaul University, and Kelly Ward of the Governor’s Office in Arizona. For a discussion of policy recommendations related to domestic violence and TANF reauthorization, see “Surviving Violence and Poverty: A Focus on the Link Between Domestic and Sexual Violence, Women’s Poverty and Welfare,” NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, September 18, 2002, p. 1-2. Accessed at <http://www.nowldef.org/html/issues/wel/Surviving.pdf>.

⁶ The Kraft project’s Houston site is a One-Stop operated by HoustonWorks USA.

One-Stops, TANF applicants and recipients would be able to access domestic violence services conveniently.

- Investigate opportunities for using the Governor's discretionary WIA funds to support domestic violence services at One-Stops.⁷
- Establish contacts with the Local Workforce Investment Board to determine if funding can be made available to support replication of the Kraft program.

The Family Violence Option protects the safety of TANF recipients and their children by granting temporary waivers from job search and work activity requirements for victims of domestic violence.

- Inform TANF applicants and recipients about the Family Violence Option during domestic violence screening.
- Provide counseling to help determine if the waiver is appropriate for the victim's situation.
- Advocate for the Family Violence Option in states where it has not been adopted.⁸

Lack of knowledge about services as well as lack of transportation and child care and the behavior of the abuser are barriers to accessing domestic violence services. A broad spectrum of agencies and programs serving low income women offer opportunities for conducting outreach for domestic violence services and for building and strengthening partnerships with domestic violence service providers.

- Place trained providers at employment services agencies, community colleges, and other sites of education and training programs.
- Incorporate into program contracts requirements that agencies screen new participants for domestic violence at intake, provide onsite domestic violence services, and screen participants who have irregular attendance records before expelling them from the program.
- Provide ongoing training in domestic violence and procedures for screening and referrals to staff at employment services agencies and other education and training programs.

⁷ As part of WIA, each Governor has authority over 15% of the state's annual WIA funding for discretionary expenditure for job training purposes, e.g., in 2003 this discretionary WIA funding amounted to \$8 million in Arizona.

⁸ For information about the Family Violence Option, see Legal Momentum (formerly NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund), "The Family Violence Option: Is Your State Taking Advantage of It?" Legal Momentum <http://www.legalmomentum.org/issues/wel/fvosur.shtml#overv>; and "Family Violence Option State by State Summary," http://www.legalmomentum.org/issues/wel/FVO_statebystate.pdf.

INTRODUCTION

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¹² The participating agencies were: Houston Area Women's Center and Houston Works; New Beginnings and TRAC Associates (Seattle); and Casa Central and Strive Employment Services (Chicago). During 2001, the project also included sites in Richmond and Denver and a second partnership in Chicago. However, due to a variety of problems during the first year, these sites did not participate during the second year. A discussion of these problems is available in "Addressing Domestic Violence as a Barrier to Work: Building Collaborations Between Domestic Violence Service Providers and Employment Services Agencies."

effective for assisting women to remain safe and employed. The Center for Impact Research (CIR) undertook the project's research component and provided technical assistance to the participating employment services agencies and domestic violence service providers. From its inception, this project was designed not only to provide direct services and build the capacity of participating agencies, but also to document and share program and participant outcomes.¹³ Thus, the purposes of the project were twofold:

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METHODOLOGY

STUDY DESIGN

Women and men at the employment services agencies were informed of onsite domestic violence services through a variety of means—during orientation sessions by the domestic violence counselor, by their employment services case manager, and by posters and flyers displayed at the agency. During their first private meeting with the domestic violence counselor, victims of current abuse by an intimate partner, or those who had been abused in the past year, were told about the research project and asked to participate in the study. Most of these women completed the initial interview. The domestic violence counselor at each site used standard forms that had been collaboratively developed by project partners to gather

¹³ The vision and ongoing support for the project were provided by Patricia Garza of Kraft and Jody Raphael, former Director for Research at CIR. The project's staff at the participating agencies were also key contributors to the research.

¹⁴ Lise McKean, "Addressing Domestic Violence as a Barrier to Work: Building Collaborations Between Domestic Violence Service Providers and Employment Services Agencies," Center for Impact Research, October 2004. Both reports are available at <http://www.impactresearch.org/publication/publicationdate.html>.

demographic data and information about the participant's household and domestic violence situation, employment, training, and service needs and referrals.

The domestic violence counselor followed up with participants for a second interview three months after the first; a third interview was conducted approximately nine months after first interview. The follow-up interviews obtained information about the participant's domestic violence situation and progress toward self-sufficiency, including employment or enrollment in training or educational programs. Because many of the women frequently changed residence or had no telephone, it was not possible to reach many of the women for follow-up. During the two-year period of services:

1,845 people attended domestic violence educational presentations at the employment services agencies.

243 women completed the initial interview and received counseling services (78.7% self-disclosed; 21.3% were identified and referred by staff).

125 women completed the second interview.

47 women completed the third interview.

Approximately 90% of the 243 women who completed the first interview had attended the domestic violence educational session. Therefore, about 12% of those who attended the domestic violence educational presentations became participants in the Kraft program. However, this figure does not include those who disclosed domestic violence, some of whom sought counseling or attended support groups, but chose not to participate in the research interviews.¹⁵ The 12% does not include domestic violence victims who did not self-disclose or those whose most recent experience of abuse was more than one year ago.

Among the 10% of the 243 participants who had not attended the domestic violence educational sessions, some were involved in other activities at the employment services agency and self-referred or were referred to the domestic violence counselor by their case manager; others were already receiving services offsite at a domestic violence agency or shelter and were referred to the employment services agency, where they became participants in the Kraft program.

Survivors in pursuit of self-sufficiency require different levels and types of services.¹⁶ For example, some survivors end the relationship, become free of the abuser, and make rapid progress towards self-sufficiency. However, many more survivors require intensive services such as legal assistance, counseling, and ongoing safety planning. Therefore, a critical aspect of this research was to better understand the complexity of survivors' situations and to examine and refine definitions of progress and success in relation to domestic violence and self-sufficiency.

¹⁵ The number of those who accessed domestic violence services but declined to participate in the research interviews is approximately 125 for the three sites. However, this figure is an estimate as this group was not uniformly tracked at all sites.

¹⁶ Studies provide data about the extent to which abusive partners interfere with working or obtaining education and training: in Colorado, 44% of current survivors reported direct work interference; in New Jersey, 39.7% of current survivors reported that partners actively try to prevent them from obtaining education and training; in Utah, 42% of current survivors reported being harassed at work by an abusive partner and 36% had to stay home from work because of abuse; in Wisconsin, 63% of current survivors reported being fired or resigning because of an abusive partner and 50% reported work absences due to severe beatings, "Surviving Violence and Poverty: A Focus on the Link Between Domestic and Sexual Violence, Women's Poverty and Welfare," NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, September 18, 2002, p. 1-2. Accessed at <http://www.nowldef.org/html/issues/wel/Surviving.pdf>.

THE SAMPLE

All 243 participants who completed the initial interview were adult women, with a median age of 30.6 years old. Most of the women had children under eighteen years of age (93.0%); the median number of children was two. Four-fifths (80.6%) were single, separated, divorced, or widowed; 16.5% were married or living with a partner; and 2.9% responded that they were in “other” types of relationships or living arrangements. The racial and ethnic composition of the sample was 42.7% African American; 27.0% Latina; 19.1% Caucasian; 4.1% biracial or multiracial; 3.3% Asian; 1.2% Native American; 1.2% Pacific Islander/Hawaiian; and 1.2% other. Nearly 90% of the women were born in the U.S.

Education

Respondents had a range of educational attainment: 42.2% had less than a high school degree; 9.9% had a high school degree; 15.5% had a GED; 28.5% had some college or an associate’s degree; and 3.9% had a bachelor’s degree.

Income

Of the 243 respondents who completed the first interview, 24.7% reported having no income at all; 51.0% reported TANF as a source of income; 7.8% reported income from full-time employment; and 4.9% from part-time employment. Public benefits programs such as Food Stamps, child care assistance, and Unemployment Insurance were reported as sources of income by 41.2% of respondents. The median monthly income was \$440 (\$506 mean). Reporting on family finances over the previous twelve months, 72.1% had to borrow money to pay bills; 63.4% did not have money to pay for food; 31.7% could not afford to pay for medical care; 30.7% had their utilities disconnected; 25.5% had been evicted; and 16.5% had used cash advances or payday loans.

Health

During the first interview, respondents were asked to rate their current physical and emotional health. One-tenth reported excellent physical health; 37.8% good; 37.8% fair; and 13.4% poor. When asked to rate their emotional health, 5.1% reported excellent; 17.7% good; 53.6% fair; and 23.2% poor. Respondents were asked the frequency of experience of a range of emotions on a scale from “most days” to “rarely.” On most days: 50% of respondents reported being depressed; 46.4% sad; 34.2% fearful; 32.2% hopeful about the future; 51.0% felt “everything I did was an effort;” and 31.6% felt “I could not get going.” Respondents were also asked about behaviors: on most days, 42.2% had trouble sleeping; 32.2% had crying spells; and 33.6% reported their appetite was poor.

First Interview and Follow-up

Approximately 50% of all the racial and ethnic groups completed at least one follow-up interview, with the exception of Asian respondents, with seven of eight women completing a follow-up interview. There was little variation among other demographic variables for respondents completing only the first interview and those completing one or more follow-up interviews.

Career Interests and Self-Sufficiency Goals

In interviews during CIR's site visits, participants were asked about their career interests and aspirations. The women's responses ranged over a wide spectrum of occupations from trades such as electrician, plumbing, painting, and welding to social work, office administration, graphic arts, cooking, teaching, and nursing. One woman declared: "I have always wanted to be a lexicographer, I love communication." Several women said that their experience in the program has interested them in becoming a domestic violence counselor.

CIR also asked participants about their self-sufficiency goals. The women spoke of their desire for stable employment—"a good solid career"—where they could earn enough to pay their bills and in time buy a car and home. One woman said, "My goal is to keep my job and go to the next level. I would like coaching on the ways I can move up in the workplace." Another woman, who already had her own apartment and car, said she would like a better car, adding, "everything I have, I've worked for." In addition to their employment and material goals, their children's well-being figured prominently in the women's comments. One woman said her goal was "to make sure I raise my kids to be healthy and moral."

FINDINGS

EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Nearly half of the respondents reported having been abused within the past six months; three-quarters reported having been abused in the past by previous partners.

During their first interview with the domestic violence counselor, respondents were asked a range of questions about their current and past experiences of domestic violence. Nearly half (48.3%) of the 236 respondents reported current abuse (occurring within the past six months). Three-quarters (75.0%) of the respondents reported having been abused in the past by past partners. Some women reported current abuse from more than one abuser, typically the current partner and a past partner who may be the father of one or more of her children.¹⁷ Nearly four-fifths (78.7%) of respondents self-disclosed domestic violence; 21.3% were identified by the domestic violence counselor or case manager at the employment services agencies and were offered services.

¹⁷ "Current abuse by a past partner" turned out to be a complicated category in many situations. The types of abuse in these cases may include but is not limited to stalking. For example, in some instances current abuse by a past partner is perpetrated by someone with whom the victim is no longer intimately involved but is still in contact with because of children or other circumstances.

The abuser was most frequently a spouse.

Respondents experiencing current abuse indicated their relationship with the abuser: 30.3% spouse; 27.0% boyfriend; 11.2% ex-spouse; and 10.7% ex-boyfriends. The type and frequency of contact with abusers varied; women reported abuse occurring even when there was no face-to-face contact with the abuser. For example, in some cases, contact may involve making arrangements with the abuser to comply with court-mandated child custody orders.

Level of contact with the abuser varied.

“Some contact” with the current abuser was reported by 45.4% of the women, and 35.3% reported some contact with a partner who had been abusive in the past. During the first interview, 26.9% of the women reported no contact with a current abuser and 39.5% reported no contact with a past partner who is still abusive. This abuse might take the form of phone calls or abuse through children. Stalking is another type of abuse that does not involve interaction or direct contact from the women’s point of view. Of women reporting no contact with abusers during the first follow-up interview, nearly one-third (32.8%) reported being abused. The median length of time separated from a past partner who was still abusive was three months; the longest length of time separated from a past partner who continued to be abusive was 11 years.

More than half of the respondents have been physically abused by their current partner. Of those reporting current physical abuse, three-quarters report severe physical aggression. Nearly three-quarters have been physically abused in the past by a past partner.

Physical abuse by a current partner was reported by 53.6% of respondents; 72.3% reported physical abuse in the past by a past partner (Table 1).¹⁸ Of those reporting current physical abuse, 75.0% reported severe physical aggression.¹⁹ Nearly half of the respondents reporting physical abuse by their current partner said that they had been abused in the past by a past partner. For those reporting physical abuse in the past by a past partner, 85.4% reported severe physical aggression.

¹⁸ In asking about physical abuse, the domestic violence counselor prefaced the question with an explanatory statement along the lines: “There are many forms of physical abuse. For example, some of the forms of physical abuse are slapping, pushing, kicking, cutting you with a knife, tying or locking you up, and strangulation.”

¹⁹ The domestic violence counselor made an assessment of the level of severity of physical abuse if the participant offered sufficient information. In this study, severe physical aggression included: kicking, hitting, beating, injuring, and threatening with or using a weapon.”

**Table 1
Physical Abuse**

Physical Abuse by Current Partner n=179		Past Physical Abuse by Past Partner n=242	
No	46.4%	No	27.7%
Yes	53.6%	Yes	72.3%
Severe Physical Aggression by Current Partner n=92		Past Severe Physical Aggression by Past Partner n=171	
No	25.0%	No	14.6%
Yes	75.0%	Yes	85.4%

Respondents who completed one or more follow-up interviews had somewhat higher and somewhat more severe levels of physical violence at intake than those who only completed the first interview. Some of these may have remained in contact with the domestic violence counselor because they were experiencing greater need. However, for other types of abuse such as controlling behavior, intimidation, stalking, and emotional/psychological abuse, the levels were similar between those who had only completed the first interview and those completing one or more follow-up interviews.

Domestic violence counselors included their comments about the severity of abuse on the form for the first interview. Regardless of the type of abuse being commented on, the counselors frequently noted that abusers were violating orders of protection and other court mandates.

The chronic terror and brutal violence reported by the respondents were further described in comments by domestic violence counselors on the situations of abuse. For example, in their comments on 41 of the cases of physical abuse (of 96 current and 175 past physical abuse), they noted: four received death threats; four were threatened with a gun; four were strangled; and 2 were stabbed. One respondent had just been hospitalized for a week and a half after having been assaulted by the abuser. Comments on injuries of respondents resulting from assault, pushing, shoving, and burning include: back pain, memory loss, black eyes, a broken jaw, ripped out hair, and a broken nose. One domestic violence counselor noted that one respondent had been subjected to “everything” by the abuser—she was raped, shot at, attacked when pregnant, and strangled.

Emotional abuse, controlling behavior, and intimidation within the last six months was reported by approximately one-half of the women currently experiencing abuse. Nearly three-quarters of women had experienced emotional abuse, controlling behavior, and intimidation in the past by past partners.

In addition to physical abuse, women experiencing current abuse reported experiencing one or more other forms of abuse within the past six months. Of other forms of abuse, the most frequently reported type of current abuse was emotional; it was followed by controlling behavior and intimidation (Table 2). Nearly half of the respondents reporting these forms abuse by their current partner said they had experienced this form of abuse in the past by a past partner (50.0% controlling behavior; 49.0% emotional abuse; and 48.8% intimidation). Approximately three-quarters of all respondents reported experiencing one or more of these three forms of abuse in the past by a past partner.

Table 2
Other Forms of Abuse

Emotional Abuse by Current Partner n=175		Past Emotional Abuse by Past Partner n=224	
No	36.6%	No	22.8%
Yes < 6 mo	53.6%	Yes	77.2%
Yes > 6 mo	5.7%		
Controlling Behavior by Current Partner n=175		Past Controlling Behavior by Past Partner n=223	
No	38.9%	No	26.0%
Yes < 6 mo	56.6%	Yes	74.0%
Yes > 6 mo	4.6%		
Intimidation by Current Partner n=176		Past Intimidation by Past Partner n=223	
No	43.2%	No	27.8%
Yes < 6 mo	48.9%	Yes	72.2%
Yes > 6 mo	8.0%		

The comments by respondents on the forms of abuse revealed the ways that abusers interfere with women’s attempts to find and keep employment and move towards self-sufficiency. For example, controlling behavior included the abuser controlling or stealing money; controlling access to the telephone, car, and transportation; and controlling contact with children, family, and friends. Comments from respondents about controlling behavior of abusers include: “I wasn’t able to gain employment and lost a lot of jobs due to my busted lip. He beat me up because I wanted to work.” “He makes me late for work.” “He won’t help with childcare.” “He isolates me from my friends and caused me to lose my job. Says I’m his property.” “I feel like I have no room to breathe.”

The forms of intimidation described in the comments by respondents and counselors disclosed not only high levels of severe physical violence but also corrosive psychological violence. Abusers threatened to inflict almost every harm imaginable: to kill her; to abduct or kill her children or other family members; to destroy her property or property of family members or friends; to report her to immigration. One woman noted, “He threatened that if I ever left, he’d find me. He’s left knives out to scare me.” Abusers can also be less overt in their tactics as the comment of one domestic violence counselor indicated: “He intimidates her in subtle ways.”

Abuse harms self-esteem, which can result in psychological barriers to employment and self-sufficiency. Women reported “constant putdowns” by abusers and relentless criticism and humiliation. Respondents said abusers deride their appearance, intellect, English skills, cooking, character, and parenting. They were also falsely accused by abusers of having sexual affairs, including with family members and friends, and of lying and breaking promises. Respondents commented: “he constantly tells me I’m stupid and I’ll never amount to anything;” “he tells me I’ll never be nothing;” “he called me every in name in the book;” “he says no one will ever want me with all my kids.”

Respondents reported high levels of current and past sexual abuse.

Nearly one-quarter of respondents experiencing current abuse reported having been sexually abused by their current partner within the past six months. Over two-fifths of all respondents reported past sexual abuse by a past partner (Table 3).

Table 3
Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse by Current Partner n=169		Past Sexual Abuse by Past Partner n=216	
No	71.0%	No	56.0%
Yes < 6 mo	23.1%	Yes	44.0%
Yes > 6 mo	5.9%		

Respondents reported high levels of stalking by current and past abusers.

Over one-quarter of respondents experiencing current abuse reported having been stalked by their current partner within the past six months. Over one-half of all respondents reported having been stalked in the past by a past partner (Table 4).

Table 4
Stalking

Stalking by Current Partner n=168		Stalking in Past by Past Partner n=217	
No	69.0%	No	48.4%
Yes < 6 mo	26.8%	Yes	51.6%
Yes > 6 mo	3.6%		

Respondents regarded stalking as telephone harassment by the abuser at home and work; surveillance and being followed by the abuser and friends or family members of the abuser; and unwanted visits by the abuser at the workplace. Stalking often intensified after the woman left the abuser. In some instances, after the woman left the abuser, he threatened her family members and friends to find out where she works and lives. Comments by respondents on stalking indicated that abusers use it to jeopardize the woman's employment. For example, one respondent said, "Since we separated, my husband found out where I got a job and started calling me there and showing up at my workplace." Another respondent who had sought legal protection was still being stalked: "I left my husband and got an order of protection. Since then he started showing up at work so I had to quit my job."

Nearly one-half of all respondents said that they feared for their own safety because of the abuser. Over one-third said that they feared for the safety of their children.

When respondents were asked if they currently feared for their own safety because of the abuser, 47.9% replied yes; 34.8% reported they feared for the safety of their children. Comments by respondents on these questions illustrate the extent to which the abusers destabilize and terrorize the lives of these women and their children. A number of women noted that the abuser was in prison or jail and they feared he would harm her when released. One respondent feared that the abuser would abduct her child. Another woman said, "I am always scared he'll come looking for me and try to kill me again." Several women who had been relocated remained extremely fearful that the abuser would find them and their children. As one woman's comment indicated, legal action against the abuser does not allay chronic fear: "I have a fifty-year protection order and still feel very scared." Another woman commented, "My husband died so I'm not scared anymore."

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A BARRIER TO EMPLOYMENT

Many of the participants in the Kraft program were recent victims of domestic violence. Some who had left the abuser continued to face a range of survivor's mental health issues, and particularly the ongoing experience of extreme fear of the abuser. A number of participants in the job placement and training programs reported being the victim of a form of family violence other than intimate partner violence. One domestic violence counselor noted that the participants who came to her for services exhibited greater fear than the domestic violence victims she saw elsewhere; a number of them who were able to disclose remained too afraid to talk about the relationship or seek services. A second counselor also commented on the high fear levels among these women, often expressed in their concerns about confidentiality.

The director of one of the employment services agencies discussed how the Kraft program brought increased awareness to all staff members of the role of domestic violence as a barrier to employment: "What had been regarded as excuses before domestic violence training, now became to be understood as legitimate barriers. Case managers developed a better sense of the kinds of barriers that domestic violence presents to their clients; they no longer work with the notion that clients just have to pull themselves up by bootstraps." Case managers also came to learn how past or current abuse can cause chronic physical and mental health problems and how the lack of knowledge among employers about domestic violence and workplace safety can make women fearful of coming to work.

Case managers at the employment services agencies observed that domestic violence interferes with attendance at training and adversely affects the victim's social skills, making some more withdrawn and others less able to control anger and frustration. One case manager said that domestic violence interferes with women's ability to perform well in job interviews because of their emotional distress. She estimated that about 50% of her clients who were experiencing abuse were working, and hypothesized that those who manage to work "have two personalities, one outside and one inside the home." The job can be important for building self-esteem for a victim but the job itself can make the relationship "an even bigger roller coaster with more for him to get upset about. It's a fight to keep the job, but they like the feeling of being appreciated at work."

Another case manager reported, "Domestic violence prevents employment often in cases where the woman has young children and is minimally educated. They may get seasonal work like at Christmas time but it's low wage work. The earnings never take care of household finances and budget, only food." For another case manager, domestic violence services are crucial because "many clients just disappear if they don't receive domestic violence services, they fall through the cracks. Often victims cannot focus on anything but the immediate or very simple work. They cannot focus on getting a better job with more responsibility and better pay."

One domestic violence counselor suggested that intermediary steps are needed to assist women during the period after they begin receiving domestic violence services and before they begin job training or a job search. This is particularly the case for women who are at domestic violence shelters. As women's lives are especially difficult after entering shelters, since often they are addressing legal, custody, and child care issues, she suggested referring shelter residents to employment programs when they are preparing for transitional living, generally after about three months at the shelter.

The domestic violence counselors identified ways that domestic violence interferes with employment efforts; they can be explicit acts of sabotage or more subtle forms of psychological and emotional manipulation. Such actions by abusers include:

Sabotage through emotional manipulation and guilt, e.g., "They say you're a bad mother or wife. Children hear abuser talk about mom being away from home and repeat it to her. This kind of emotional attack is the leading reason for women to drop out of programs."

Isolation of the victim, especially through physical abuse that is visible and not able to be hidden. This keeps victim from going out to work, school, and elsewhere.

Destruction of clothing and class materials.

Physical assault so the victim will be too injured to leave home.

Sabotage of transportation, e.g., the abuser promises to drive the victim but does not, the abuser takes bus tokens or money for transportation.

Sabotage of the process of recovery from alcohol or substance abuse, e.g, abuser encourages or forces victim to use alcohol or drugs.

Sabotage of child care arrangements.

Sabotage of birth control to keep the woman pregnant and at home.

Threats of exposing the woman's immigration status, of divorcing, taking children, and sending woman back to her native country.

Terrorization of the victim through stalking and fear of stalking.

Implication of the victim in criminal activity.

The experiences reported by participants illustrate the multitude of ways that domestic violence interferes with women's efforts to obtain and retain employment. For one woman, the reappearance of the abuser after many years destroyed the stable home life she had established for herself and her children. She started leaving work early to pick up her children because the abuser was showing up at their school. She was terrified he would kidnap them. The children became so upset they started wetting the bed and became withdrawn. Her son stopped attending his after-school program because he was so afraid.

After a couple of months, she lost her job because of the disruption to her schedule and the stress. In talking about her situation, she said, "Ever since May he changed my life. I'm behind on my rent. He broke into my apartment twice in the past and one time he raped me. Everywhere I go I'm scared. I'm petrified." She has an order of protection against her ex-husband but it does not make her feel safer. She said that it took her a while to feel comfortable to speak with the domestic violence counselor, "I finally talked to her. I was too proud before." At the time of her interview with CIR, she was trying to be relocated. Meanwhile, she was enrolled in GED classes and applying for jobs. "I consider myself a survivor. I'm not going to let him win. The program has helped me a lot. Before I was scared of everyone."

SERVICE NEEDS

The service needs of domestic violence victims are related to the details of their individual circumstances. Participants discussed their needs during the intake interview and subsequent meetings with the domestic violence counselors. During the intake interview counselors asked a series of questions to assess the history, frequency, severity, and effects of current and past abuse, with particular attention to the relation between work-related activities and abuse. This information is essential not only for determining services needed by the participant but also for safety and self-sufficiency planning.

Domestic violence counselors provided a range of services to participants including counseling, crisis intervention, safety planning, support groups, legal and court advocacy, and referrals to other services. During the assessment the counselor also reviewed the needs of the victim's children and provided referrals to counseling and other services for them. In some situations, participants preferred to access services offsite at the domestic violence agency. Table 5 shows the service needs that were identified by the participants and the domestic violence counselors during the intake interviews. More than one-half of the participants needed services related to housing, financial assistance, food and/or clothing, education, mental health, and peer group support. Most participants were in need of multiple services.

Table 5
Service Needs of Participants

Service Needs of Participant n=243	
Support group	72.5%
Food/clothing	59.1%
Education	56.4%
Financial assistance	56.2%
Housing	54.0%
Mental health	50.2%
Community advocacy	39.1%
Child care	33.6%
Legal advocacy	33.2%
Legal services	30.6%
Parenting skills	30.6%
Transportation	29.8%
Healthcare	22.7%
Shelter	19.6%
Court advocacy	14.2%
Alcohol or drug treatment	9.4%
Culture-specific services	8.9%
English language classes	3.4%
Interpreter services	1.7%
Other	3.0%

The domestic violence counselors tracked the type and amount of time spent on providing services to participants. In some sites as the caseload grew over time and the counselor’s schedule became busier, there was less time for lengthy individual counseling sessions. Most of the counselor’s time was devoted to individual and group counseling and legal advocacy. For the participants who completed the three-month follow-up interview, counselors reported having provided a median of 11.5 hours of services per participant (mean of 19.9 hours).

One case manager noted that “the first thing clients think is that they can’t go to work because of day care, transportation, and clothes.” In many cases, the domestic violence counselor was effective in assisting participants not only with domestic violence issues but also in making referrals for services to address these key barriers to work. One participant said that obtaining day care was crucial for eliminating the need to rely on the abuser to care for their child while she is working. One of the domestic violence counselors said, “It’s important to assist participants in following through on referrals. I place the call and then hand the phone over to them. Picking up the phone and calling an unknown place can be a major hurdle.” This same counselor reported that participants needed safe, affordable housing: “Most of our clients are pretty much homeless. They stay with friends or relatives. But it’s important for them to be able to contribute something to the household where they are staying and they really appreciate being able to go to the pantry and bring food to the household.”

Counselors stated there was a need for discretionary funds to assist participants to access resources or special services that help with finding and staying employed, such as dental care; haircuts; clothing for work; transportation; and placement services for participants with criminal records. Counselors also noted that many participants needed access to quality mental health services and substance abuse treatment programs. The domestic violence counselors agreed that younger women, especially those under 25, who may also be more likely to have infants and young children, often were more isolated and vulnerable to domestic violence and had fewer resources for addressing it. Women with large families and teenage sons often found it more difficult to find shelter and services, as did women without

children. In some situations, where other interventions have proven ineffective, victims decided to undergo an identity change, which is a complex and labor-intensive process.

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

A little more than one-half (125) of the 243 participants who completed the intake interview with the domestic violence counselor were also respondents for the first follow-up interview three months later. Despite the counselors' resourceful efforts, it turned out to be impossible to follow up with many of the participants—they were no longer involved with the employment services agency, they had moved away, their telephones were disconnected or addresses changed. In some cases, participants still received counseling or attended support groups but preferred not to complete the second interview. The follow-up interviews obtained information about changes in the woman's domestic violence situation, her knowledge of safety planning, and her employment or training status. Both in their follow-up interviews with the domestic violence counselors and in their interviews with CIR during site visits, participants provided a wealth of information on their experience of the services provided through the Kraft project and the effects of the services on their efforts to become safe and self-sufficient.

Many of the participants commented that they had never heard of domestic violence services before or had never accessed them. One participant told CIR, "This is the first place I received help with domestic violence. It came naturally at here. We were all here for the same reasons." A participant commented, "I had never talked to any counselor before. I'm depressed all the time. I've always felt like I have no one to talk to. I have gotten a lot of positive feedback from domestic violence services. I can handle situations. I've built up my self esteem and I've learned not to blame myself." She also noted that she received assistance from the counselor with referrals for food, rental assistance, and around Christmas time with the Christmas store and holiday events. Another participant remarked, "I came for computer training and found I could get counseling and attend group." In commenting on her participation in the program, one woman said, "I am breaking the mold. My grandmother and mother were abused. I want to become a domestic violence advocate."

The goal of the project's domestic violence services was to address domestic violence as a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency. One of the domestic violence counselors said that through the informational sessions, counseling, and support groups, the women "learn that their experience of abuse is not an isolated incident but a pattern; it helps them to give the problem a name." Another counselor said that for many people at the employment services agency, the crucial feature of the Kraft program was the opportunity to become informed about domestic violence, to learn to name and understand it, and to come to know their legal rights. She said that regardless of whether they became formal participants by completing the intake interview, being exposed to this information helped people understand their own situation better. Through the domestic violence informational sessions, they learned about their options and where they can obtain legal services and shelter. They also learned about safety planning for themselves and their children.

The counselors talked with program participants about domestic violence and relevant services, empowered and supported them in making their own decisions, and provided the tools and resources for staying safe as participants work towards attaining self-sufficiency. After receiving services, some women decided to leave their abuser right away; others did not. In many cases, the abuse persisted despite orders of protection and other attempts to halt the abuser's contact with them. In their follow-up interviews with

the domestic violence counselor three and nine months after the initial interview, participants reported improvements in all aspects of their domestic violence situation (Table 6). However, the sizeable differences between the number of respondents completing the intake interview and the three-month and nine-month follow-up interviews mean that the figures in Table 6 indicate trends for the groups of subsequent respondents rather than provide data for conclusive comparisons among the groups.

Table 6
Participant Outcomes: Domestic Violence Situation

Domestic Violence Situation	3 month follow-up n=116	9 month follow-up n=47
Can articulate a safety plan	80.4%	90.5%
Domestic violence situation improved	79.5%	80.0%
Coping skills improved	71.3%	79.5%
Abuse stopped since entering program	43.3%	52.5%
Abuser interfered with training or job	25.7%	20.0%

Completing the program at the employment services agency and moving on to a job or further education and training were regarded by participants as essential steps toward self-sufficiency. When asked about self-sufficiency, one participant responded, “It’s about having a good job to create stability and from stability building accomplishments. It means facing the challenge of making decisions for myself; and it means having my own apartment and car.” In an extensive interview with CIR, one participant who had found employment in a clerical position at the employment services agency recounted her experience. Talking about her understanding of abuse prior to her involvement in the Kraft program, she said, “I used to think of abuse only in terms of physical abuse. He would tear up my clothes when I tried to leave and put me down for coming to job training.” She had been referred to the domestic violence counselor by her case manager and it was the first time she had sought help: “I loved counseling. At first I didn’t want to go. I was embarrassed. Most girls would just say ‘leave.’ But the counselor didn’t.” The abuser still had contact with her because of their children—“He still tries to control me and blame me”—but counseling has helped her protect herself from the abuse. Her goal is to earn her degree and become a domestic violence counselor.

At the three-month follow-up interview, over three-quarters of the participants were either employed or enrolled in job training or an educational program (Table 7). A slightly larger proportion was employed at the next interview six months later. In both interview groups, less than one-quarter of the participants were neither employed nor enrolled in a training or educational program. As with the data for changes in domestic violence discussed above, the differences between the number of respondents completing the intake interview and the three-month and nine-month follow-up interviews limit the comparability of the groups.

Table 7
Participant Outcomes: Employment and Training

Status	3 month follow-up n=116	9 month follow-up n=47
Employed	52.5%	57.4%
Enrolled in job training or educational program	23.7%	21.3%

The domestic violence counselors noted the role of employment in increasing the self-esteem and independence of all participants. They also reported the importance of employment in stabilizing the lives of women who had not left the abuser. One commented that some participants “put their foot down and were able to work. They empowered themselves by working and regained some control.” This counselor also observed that most of the participants that she has counseled who stayed with the abuser were married.

When asked about the impact of having domestic violence services onsite, the case managers unanimously were positive about its effects on supporting employment. A case manager stated that before the domestic violence counselor had come to the agency, she did not know of any clients with domestic violence issues who had completed the training. A case manager said, “If there’s anything we can do, we can have the domestic violence services here.” She gave an example of a client who had obvious signs of abuse and dropped out of the program. One month later the woman returned and told the case manager, “I had to swallow my pride.” This woman was now seeing the domestic violence counselor and trying to find a job and go back to school. Another participant with six children was afraid to work because the abuser was stalking her. The domestic violence counselor helped her obtain an order of protection and provided counseling and other support services. This participant found a job as a dispatcher and was able to rent her own apartment.

A case manager felt strongly that the Kraft project had improved her agency’s ability to serve its clients by building its capacity to address domestic violence as a barrier to employment: “The impact has been significant. It has increased our ability to retain clients with domestic violence problems. It makes people feel our agency is more in tune with their needs and helps us retain contact with them. It impacts how and how effectively we do our work. Seventy to 80 percent of our clients say they are affected by domestic violence—current, past, in their own lives, in parents’ lives, etc. This makes it relevant to them to learn about the issue and to have someone to call.”

This case manager added that the focus on domestic violence as a barrier has shown the agency why in the past they were not able to retain as many clients and support them in employment. She also found that the intensive case management being done around domestic violence issues made her agency more aware of clients’ needs for supportive services: “It opened the door for change. It’s made my work better because I can do my job better. We went from training people for the workplace to a more holistic approach. I now see my job as empowering clients.” She also noted that job retention among domestic violence victims at her agency has improved.

Case managers made a range of comments on the effects of the Kraft program on services and client outcomes. One said, “It’s a load off my shoulders to know that the domestic violence counselor is here and can give clients more intensive services.” A placement and advancement case manager said that the counselor’s work with domestic violence victims has increased placements and that being onsite is crucial because most women do not go to offsite referrals: “The Kraft project has affected my own work as a case manager because it helps increase my numbers.”

Supervisors and managers at the employment services agencies agreed that the Kraft program had positive effects for clients and staff. One noted that staff at her agency “are more confident and better understand the issue of domestic violence. The training has helped them as well as the experience of seeing clients do better when they receive domestic violence services. Training the staff on domestic violence issues has helped transform them into client advocates.” She reported that case managers’ perceptions of clients have changed due to the training, and as a result there have been changes in the

services they provide. She also said that issues of confidentiality and security were emphasized in the trainings, and as a result the agency as a whole became more aware of their importance for domestic violence victims.

A supervisor at one of the employment services agencies said that there have been very important qualitative changes within the agency as a result of the Kraft project. The agency has changed completely to an environment with high awareness of domestic violence since the onsite counselor began “marketing” domestic violence services within the agency. In her view, the presence of the domestic violence counselor at the agency was the project’s most crucial component. It made case managers feel comfortable about addressing domestic violence; they knew the counselor was experienced and accessible to clients, and this gave them more confidence about making referrals. Case managers also saw the difference from the past when clients with domestic violence problems would not follow up on offsite referrals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The stakeholders in this Kraft project—domestic violence victims, employment services agencies, and domestic violence service providers—concurred that the project accomplished its goals of empowering individuals and service providers to address domestic violence as a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency. Coordinated advocacy by workforce development agencies, domestic violence service providers, and other groups representing women and low-wage workers must continue to inform public policy at the federal, state, and local levels about the role of domestic violence as a barrier to employment.

Advocacy efforts should also publicize effective models for addressing this barrier and call for public funding for programs that can deliver effective domestic violence services at employment services agencies. In the words of one employment services agency manager: “We feel a great loss over the end of the Kraft program. It is a model that clearly works. We have a higher placement and retention rate for domestic violence victims than before the program.”

The findings of the Kraft project highlight the crucial need for ongoing response to the fact that domestic violence harms individuals, families, and communities and acts as a barrier to employment and self-sufficiency. The following are specific recommendations for public policies and social services that can help to remove this barrier.²⁰

²⁰ Suggestions to the recommendations were made by Rose Karasti of Chicago Jobs Council, Jody Raphael of DePaul University, and Kelly Ward of the Governor’s Office in Arizona. For a discussion of policy recommendations related to domestic violence and TANF reauthorization, see “Surviving Violence and Poverty: A Focus on the Link Between Domestic and Sexual Violence, Women’s Poverty and Welfare,” NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, September 18, 2002, p. 1-2. Accessed at <http://www.nowldef.org/html/issues/wel/Surviving.pdf>.

The high prevalence of domestic violence among low-income women indicates the importance of effective domestic violence screening and referrals for applicants and recipients of TANF.

- Require that all TANF applicants are screened for domestic violence by a trained provider.
- Require that all TANF recipients are screened for domestic violence by a trained provider before proceeding with sanctions.
- Do not require victims of domestic violence to participate in marriage promotion programs if it would jeopardize their own and their children's safety.
- Provide ongoing training for TANF caseworkers on domestic violence and procedures for screening and referrals.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires states to establish One-Stop centers where individuals can access a variety of job training and job placement services in one location. Because many employment services are already consolidated at these locations, One-Stops are a practical venue for a replication of the Kraft program.²¹ Furthermore, with TANF caseworkers already located at selected One-Stops, TANF applicants and recipients would be able to access domestic violence services conveniently.

- Investigate opportunities for using the Governor's discretionary WIA funds to support domestic violence services at One-Stops.²²
- Establish contacts with the Local Workforce Investment Board to determine if funding can be made available to support replication of the Kraft program.

The Family Violence Option protects the safety of TANF recipients and their children by granting temporary waivers from job search and work activity requirements for victims of domestic violence.

- Inform TANF applicants and recipients about the Family Violence Option during domestic violence screening.
- Provide counseling to help determine if the waiver is appropriate for the victim's situation.
- Advocate for the Family Violence Option in states where it has not been adopted.²³

²¹ The Kraft project's Houston site is a One-Stop operated by HoustonWorks USA.

²² As part of WIA, each Governor has authority over 15% of the state's annual WIA funding for discretionary expenditure for job training purposes, e.g., in 2003 this discretionary WIA funding amounted to \$8 million in Arizona.

²³ For information about the Family Violence Option, see Legal Momentum (formerly NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund), "The Family Violence Option: Is Your State Taking Advantage of It?" Legal Momentum <http://www.legalmomentum.org/issues/wel/fvosur.shtml#overv>; and "Family Violence Option State by State Summary," http://www.legalmomentum.org/issues/wel/FVO_statebystate.pdf.

Lack of knowledge about services as well as lack of transportation and child care and the behavior of the abuser are barriers to accessing domestic violence services. A broad spectrum of agencies and programs serving low income women offer opportunities for conducting outreach for domestic violence services and for building and strengthening partnerships with domestic violence service providers.

- Place trained providers at employment services agencies, community colleges, and other sites of education and training programs.
- Incorporate into program contracts requirements that agencies screen new participants for domestic violence at intake, provide onsite domestic violence services, and screen participants who have irregular attendance records before expelling them from the program.
- Provide ongoing training in domestic violence and procedures for screening and referrals to staff at employment services agencies and other education and training programs.

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