

INTER AGENCY RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN W.A.

This is a summary of a presentation made to the West Australian Crime Prevention Council in April by Jennifer Gardiner. Jennifer is a Lecturer in the School of Social Work at Curtin University of Technology, Perth. She has a grant from the Criminology Research Council to undertake an action research study of the establishment phase of an interagency criminal justice response to domestic violence in Armadale, West Australia known as the Armadale Domestic Violence Intervention Project (ADVIP). Jennifer visited a similar project in New Zealand, the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Pilot Project (HAIPP) in February this year.

ADVIP is modelled on an interagency criminal-justice response developed in Duluth, Minnesota which has been the subject of much research. In 1984, the famous Sherman and Berk study found that of three interventions by police with perpetrators of domestic violence, viz: mediation, separation and arrest, the arrested group had a much lower rate of recidivism. The Duluth Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) was developed on the basis of that research.

It was argued that all agencies and personnel involved in intervening in domestic violence viz: police, court, corrections, refuge, should have a consistent, coordinated, criminal-justice response to domestic assault. This approach would give the perpetrator and the community the message that domestic violence was unacceptable and a crime and would be dealt with as such. The key principles of this approach are:-

- * Violence in the home is dealt with as a crime.
- * The abuser is made accountable for his actions.
- * The onus of intervening is shifted from the victim to the community and agencies which deal with domestic violence.
- * All agencies involved - police, courts, victim support, social services, probation and abuser education/counselling are integrated and consistent in their approach through coordinated policy development.
- * All systems are monitored to ensure accountability and compliance with policies.

The key strategies in achieving the above are:

- * Police attend with the purpose of collecting evidence of an offence (not to restore peace) and remove the offender to provide immediate safety to victim and for charging.
- * A victim advocate attends the scene to provide immediate support and advice to the

victim. Post-incident ongoing victim support groups are available.

- * A Legal advocate provides support and advice to the victim re restraining or protection orders, breaches and the court process if it goes to a defended hearing.
- * Prosecutors actively pursue a prosecution.
- * Judiciary sentence less serious offenders who would not get a jail term to attend a 26 week abuser education programme as part of probation. Subsequent offences receive increasingly harsher penalties.
- * Probation/Correctional services breach if there is non-compliance.
- * All agencies are monitored by the project to ensure accountability
- * Key agency and project personnel meet regularly to discuss coordinated policies and protocols and address issues of accountability.

Armadale was chosen as a WA pilot because the two key agencies - Police and Refuge, were both interested and willing to work together to develop an interagency criminal justice approach. This, itself is 'radical' because traditionally, many Police and Refuges have not had a constructive or collaborative working relationship.

ADVIP is still in the early stages of its establishment but the goal is to be up and running in the latter part of 1993. The interagency committee has been meeting monthly since December, 1992 and comprises local Managers and/or front-line workers in Refuge, Police, Corrections, Community Services, Hospital, and other interested non-government service providers.

The interim coordinator of the project, has been seconded from the local Refuge. The officer in charge of the Armadale police station has been developing policy and protocols for his officers

when attending a 'domestic' developed from a pro-arrest/ victim support approach to policing. The regional Corrections office is very supportive of the project as is the local Clerk of Courts.

Crisis victim advocacy will be provided through the local refuge. Local groups with expertise and interest will provide ongoing victim support groups to support women in the longer term whilst they make decisions about their life and while their (ex)partner attends the 26 offender education programme.

The most dangerous time for a women who has a violent partner is when she decides to terminate the relationship and leave. By having the man in the offender programme he is monitored and if there is any fear for the safety of the woman she will be assisted.

The offender education groups will be coordinated by ADVIP. Facilitators for the offender groups will be drawn from a number of areas with expertise such as non-government agencies, corrections officers, social welfare workers, etc. Training in the Duluth curriculum will be provided. The Duluth curriculum is based on a gender analysis of power and control and locates men's violence towards women in the culture.

It is not a psychotherapeutic but a cognitive-behavioural (educational) model designed to encourage both attitude and behaviour change.

An innovation to the Duluth model pioneered by the Hamilton, NZ project is the parallel development of Maori and non-Maori services for victims and abusers. The ADVIP project is working with a group of aboriginal workers and local people to develop similar parallel programmes recognising that aboriginal family violence will be more effectively addressed by the aboriginal community.

A key element of the Duluth model is the development of agreed-upon inter and intra agency policies and practices. The actions of the members of these various agencies which intervene in the violence in one way or another are closely monitored.

This is a very different model of horizontal accountability (i.e. each agency is accountable to each other, to the project and, ultimately to the victims) rather than the traditional vertical accountability to those in charge within an agency.

A coordinated inter-agency response to domestic violence has numerous advantages. It takes the onus away from the victim having to take responsibility for stopping the violence.

Victims receive better protection, safety and support than currently is the case. Police have help in carrying out the difficult task of ensuring the victim and her children's immediate safety and providing crisis assistance and are freed to deal with the violent person. The prosecution will be more effective because police have collected all relevant evidence of a crime. The judiciary will have a rehabilitation programme they can refer less-serious offenders to and will then be able to respond more appropriately with recidivists because they had the opportunity to change. Individuals and the community will get the message through the consistent response that violence in the home will not be tolerated.

If any readers want more information on the project they can write, phone or fax Jennifer Gardiner, Lecturer, School of Social Work, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box 1987, Perth, 6001, phone (09) 351-7040, fax (09) 351-3192.

TOURISM INCREASES HOTEL SECURITY AUDIT

Over recent years there has been an improvement in the standard of personal security facilities being provided at hotels for cash and other valuables carried by tourists. One of the more popular security measures is the provision of in-room safes.

One company, Cire International, has moved into the high tech realm with the introduction of keyless electronic safes. Known as Elsafe, the company claims that hotel guests are now able to leave valuables in their rooms instead of the usual method of transferring such items to hotel lobbys or other security rooms.

Electronic personal security facilities are likely to increase over the next few years in most major hotel/motel chains, before they extend to other tourist accommodation centres.

The electronic safes have significant advantages over their mechanical counterparts in that these new lock systems are said to be tamper proof.