

## POLICY PRIORITY

### THE CRITICAL NEED FOR FUNDING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

#### ISSUE

Ensuring that Pennsylvania's 61 domestic violence programs receive the funding they need to provide services to all victims who come to them is PCADV's top policy priority. Currently, our funding situation is dire: as public funding has eroded, programs have been losing staff and consequently losing the capacity to meet victims' needs.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Prioritize Enactment of House Bill 59: Dedicated Revenue Via Marriage License/Divorce Filing Fees**
- **Support an Increase in the State Budget Line Item for Domestic Violence Services**

#### BACKGROUND

##### Inadequate Funding Strains Programs

- Since 2001, federal and state funding for domestic violence services in Pennsylvania has increased only 1.83% - a mere \$501,207.
- **The proportion of programs' budgets provided by state and federal funding has decreased from roughly half to now only 32%.** That means that domestic violence programs must raise 68% of their budgets from local fundraising efforts.
  - ◆ Local corporate, foundation, and other charitable sources are stagnant or decreasing due to the volatile economy and reduced charitable giving.
  - ◆ For many programs in rural areas, private foundations and charities are few and far between, leaving programs with few alternatives but to cut costs.

#### STATE & FEDERAL FUNDING FOR STATEWIDE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES FY 01-02 THROUGH FY 08-09

| Fiscal Year | State Funds                               |   | State Funds - Actual Increase/Decrease            | Federal Funds* | Federal Funds - Actual Increase/Decrease            |
|-------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|
|             | Act 44<br>(Criminal fines & general fund) | Act 222<br>(Marriage License surcharge) |   |                |   |
| 2001-02     | \$11,912,000                              | \$733,000                               | +2%   | \$9,166,793    |   |
| 2002-03     | \$11,912,000                              | \$733,000                               | No change   | \$9,191,607    | +0.27%  |
| 2003-04     | \$11,316,000                              | \$733,000                               | -5%   | \$9,279,200    | +0.95%  |
| 2004-05     | \$11,542,000                              | \$733,000                               | +2%   | \$9,279,200    | No change   |
| 2005-06     | \$11,542,000                              | \$733,000                               | No change   | \$9,279,200    | No change   |
| 2006-07     | \$11,772,000                              | \$733,000                               | +2%   | \$9,279,200    | No change   |
| 2007-08     | \$12,525,000                              | \$733,000                               | +6.4%   | \$8,855,000    | -4.57%  |
| 2008-09     | \$12,625,000                              | \$733,000                               | +0.8%   | \$8,855,000    | No change   |
|             |   |   | Total 5.6% increase in state funds since FY 01/02 |                | Total 3.4% decrease in federal funds since FY 01-02 |

**Combined state & federal funds increased only 1.83% - just \$501,207 - since FY 01-02**

\*Federal funds include SSBG, FVPSA, PHHSBG, and SDFSCA

**THE CRITICAL NEED FOR FUNDING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES**

**Operating Costs Have Skyrocketed**

The costs of providing shelter, counseling, and advocacy for victims all across the state, 24 hours per day, is staggering.

- Operating costs, such as health, property and liability insurance, utility services and heating, are at an all time high.
- Beyond the usual costs of any business, domestic violence shelters also must pay for the **expenses required of running a 24-hour residential facility**, including food and clothing for victims and their children in shelter, heat and other utilities, and gasoline for transportation to court and medical appointments.
- According to the Consumer Price Index, the cost of food has risen 17.6%; fuels and utilities are up 43.7%; and gasoline prices have increased 71.2%, all since just 2001. These increases overwhelm domestic violence programs just as they do individual consumers – **except that for domestic violence programs, absorbing such increases means cutting back on services to victims in life-threatening crises.**

| <b>INCREASING OPERATING COSTS - CONSUMER PRICE INDEX <sup>15</sup></b> |                                  |                               |   |                                 |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|  | % Increase in CPI -<br>All Items | % Increase in CPI -<br>Food   | % Increase in CPI -<br>Household Fuels<br>& Utilities | % Increase in CPI -<br>Gasoline |
| 2001-02  | +1.6                             | +3.2                          | +8.9  | -6.5                            |
| 2002-03  | +2.3                             | +2.2                          | +7.6  | +16.5                           |
| 2003-04  | +2.7                             | +3.4                          | +4.8  | +18.2                           |
| 2004-05  | +3.4                             | +2.4                          | +10.6   | +21.9                           |
| 2005-06  | +3.2                             | +2.4                          | +8.8  | +12.9                           |
| 2006-07  | +2.8                             | +4.0                          | +3.0  | +8.2                            |
|  | +16.0% increase in<br>2001-07    | +17.6% increase in<br>2001-07 | +43.7% increase in<br>2001-07                         | +71.2% increase in<br>2001-07   |

<sup>15</sup> All figures taken from the Consumer Price Index, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Annual Average Indexes* 2001 through 2007, available at [www.bls.gov/cpi/cpi\\_dr.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cpi/cpi_dr.htm).

**THE CRITICAL NEED FOR FUNDING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES**

**Impact of Insufficient Funding on Services to Victims**

The devastating impact of dwindling funds and rising costs is not speculative, it is already happening. Programs all across the state report **drastic cuts and consequences**. For example:

- One program reports that staffing decreases in children's counseling and advocacy have caused a **drop of 52% in children's services**.
- Another **reduced its community education by 80% and eliminated school programs**.
- Another **closed its Legal Advocacy office** in January 2004.
- Another program had to **eliminate services for children, and saw its shelter capacity drop from 17 to 1 because of insufficient staff** to provide services.

The consistent lack of adequate funding is having a profound and **long-term impact on victims' safety**.

- **Cutting program staff directly affects victims** by reducing the resources available to meet their needs.
  - ◆ For example, if one Legal Advocate position helps 250 victims per year with obtaining PFA orders, accompanying victims as they face their abusers in the courtroom, and accessing and understanding available legal remedies, then **the loss of that one position means 250 per year will not receive those essential services**.
- Inadequate funding means **lost opportunities to offer safety and protection to victims and lost opportunities to reduce injury and prevent homicides**.
  - ◆ According to a national survey of domestic violence services provided on a single day in 2007, Pennsylvania's programs had **209 unmet requests for services on just one day**, up from 109 unmet requests for services on a single day in 2006. That represents **an increase of more than 90% in unmet requests for services between 2006 and 2007**.<sup>16</sup>
- Beyond providing essential intervention services directly to victims, programs also are responsible for guiding and coordinating their communities' response to domestic violence and initiating broad prevention initiatives. Lack of sufficient funding again will result in **lost opportunities to change attitudes, improve systemic responses, and prevent future abuse**.
  - ◆ According to a national survey of domestic violence services provided on a single day, Pennsylvania's programs trained only 1,546 persons in the 2007 survey as compared to 3,450 on a single day in 2006.<sup>17</sup> That figure represents a **reduction of nearly 55% in people trained through programs' community prevention and education efforts – caused directly by a lack of staff**.

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16 National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), *Domestic Violence Counts: The National Census of Domestic Violence Services*, Executive Summary for Pennsylvania (2007), available at <http://www.nnedv.org/census>.

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**THE CRITICAL NEED FOR FUNDING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES**

**Current Funding Needs and Proposals**

Based upon the last statewide needs assessment conducted by PCADV in 2005, the additional funding needed by the statewide network of services is \$6,871,613. This represents the minimum increase needed by the 61 domestic violence programs to address the demand for services, which far outweighs the funding that is available to respond to the complex, varied and often overwhelming needs of victims.

In sum, Pennsylvania's domestic violence programs are struggling to maintain operations and respond to requests for help from thousands victims and their children annually. Now, throughout the state, programs have had to lay off staff and cut back on community education and prevention efforts, have had to implement waiting lists for services, have had to bus victims to another program in another county because the shelter was full to capacity. Again, the situation is dire, and programs do not have the ability to sustain services without additional funding.

**House Bill 59: Dedicated Revenue Via Marriage License/Divorce Filing Fees**

As you know, on **August 12**, this Committee held a **hearing** on House Bill 59, our legislation to raise dedicated revenue for domestic. From that, we know that you are aware of the pressing need for enactment of this bill. For those unable to attend that hearing, copies of our testimony have been provided. We want to **thank Chairman Caltagirone for his leadership and commitment** to advance this legislation as early as possible in the new session. **We ask you all for your continued support for House Bill 59, and that you prioritize its enactment as soon as possible next session.**

**State Budget Line Item for Domestic Violence Services**

We also ask for your continued support for an increase in the state budget line item for domestic violence services. At a minimum, a 3% COLA is desperately needed in the FY 09-10 state budget. We know well that these are extremely tough economic times, that state revenues are lagging behind projections, and that tough choices about cuts to certain areas must be made. **But – as the recent spike in domestic violence deaths demonstrates – it is now more than ever that domestic violence programs need the funding to sustain services to those most in need.**

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**The Effect of the Current Economic Crisis on Domestic Violence Victims and Programs**

While economic woes like recession and unemployment do not cause domestic violence, they do commonly **exacerbate it and contribute to increases in frequency and severity**. Included in your folders is a sampling of recent media regarding the effect of the current economic crisis domestic violence victims and the programs that serve them. Additionally:

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline has documented a **21% increase in calls** for September 2008 as compared to September 2007.
- Many programs in Pennsylvania are reporting that their emergency shelters have been at or near capacity for months.
- The number of **unmet requests for services continues to grow**: in FY 07-08, **5,272 victims** reached out to one of our domestic violence programs for help yet were **put on a waiting list or referred elsewhere because of that program's lack of resources**.<sup>18</sup> This number is up from 5,106 in FY 06-07, and on track to grow again in FY 08-09.

Additionally, other systems that are critical to a coordinated community response are being dramatically affected by the dismal economy and dire budget shortfalls. In particular, funding for local police and sheriffs' departments is severely threatened; fewer officers may mean that victims face extended response times during acutely violent assaults, or that officers lack the time to receive specialized training in domestic violence or participate in local domestic violence task forces.

Importantly, however, the poor economy does not directly cause a spike in the crime rate overall, but rather **increases in crime rates occur only among certain types of crimes – such as domestic violence**.

- In a recent article, one criminal justice expert explained the effect of the worsening economy on the crime rate this way: “Is somebody who's never pulled a strong-armed stickup in their life likely to go start doing that because they lost their job? Not so much. Is a household that's already been troubled and has a history of domestic violence going to be even further strained, and is it likely to escalate? Much more likely.”<sup>19</sup>

**These increases are consistent with what we know about abusers** – that they use coercive controls including violence to establish dominance and maintain control, and that **when their sense of control is shaken, such as by losing their economic control over victims, they lash out in other ways**. Assaults may also be triggered by disputes over money, or by abusers simply being home more often because they are unemployed. In short, even with the hard economic times that the state budget is facing, it is now **more than ever that domestic violence programs need additional funding to meet the increased demand for their services**.

**The need for funding pervades all other aspects of domestic violence services**: without adequate staff, victim interventions and community prevention simply cannot be accomplished to their full potential.

18 *Pennsylvania Domestic Violence Program Service Numbers – 2007/08*, PCADV (2008), available at upon request and at [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org).

19 L. Sullivan, “Experts: Bad Economies Don't Cause Crime Waves,” National Public Radio, *Morning Edition*, Nov. 20, 2008, available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97234406>.