# The State of Domestic Violence Victim Services in Wisconsin



2009, 43 victims and their children 9 out 10 were turned away because the shelter was full. The agency has experienced increases in all areas and offered counseling services to 83 more victims, a 27 percent rise.

From Jan. to May of 2010, the Community Referral Agency provided almost as many shelter nights (1,843) as it did in all of 2009 (1,910), requiring a waiting list. 67 additional victims in received legal advocacy, a 134% increase.

Seven families that have been victimized by abuse are waiting for transitional housing in Barron County.

The Bridge to Hope provided 60% more shelter nights. The average stay rose to 3 months as victims lacked other options.

Advocates at Time Out Family Abuse Shelter earn between \$9 and \$11 per hour.

Intervention Project

in 2010.

clients and is on

pace to continue

served 10% more

The Family Support Center saw an increased demand in several areas: total victims served up 30%; 25% more shelter nights; 21% more legal advocacy; and 18% more counseling.

victims who

work with a

strategies for

safety.

domestic violence

program have enhanced

Bolton Refuge House shelter was over capacity for all of 2008 and 2009. Shelter stays increased 50%. The agency saw cuts in funding that brought a reduction in staff hours, Increasingly complex client assistance and cases resulted in dououtreach.

ble the amount of office visits for victims at the PDC in Marshfield.

> "I truly believe in my heart that the work done at the shelter

over the years has In 2009, DAIS not only saved the lives of women and provided shelter children, but also at rates approxi-

officers." mately 75% higher than the -Deputy Police Chief previous Passages' legal advocacy record

rose by about 60%, requiring 131 more hours of staff time.

The agency lost significant county funds.

programs and layoff staff. Green Haven served

(2008).

50% more victims. has nearly doubled since 2008.

In the past few years, domestic violence victim programs have seen steady increases in demand for services. These programs have been stretched to the limit as victims have fewer resources for escape, funding streams decline and other social service providers cannot meet victims' complex needs. Stable support for these programs is critical if they are going to continue saving the lives of victims and children in Wisconsin.

The Tri-County Council on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault saw an 80% rise in shelter nights.

I felt safe when I walked through the doors of the shelter for the first time. I felt like I had somewhere to go when there was no

If it

was

not

for

the

shelter, I

would

not be

alive

today

where else to turn. During my stay, I became more confident in myself. now feel like I am not always to blame. I hope to go back to school and get my nursing license back so I can provide a decent life for myself and my children.

2009 was a record year for domestic violence homicides in Wisconsin. In 47 incidents, over 60 people lost their lives. 2008 was a

record year for Safe Haven. Harbor House's

shelter was over capacity 50% of the time in 2009. Harbor House pro-The 146 victims and

vided 16,127 children sheltered at days of care, CAP Services repreup sent a 30% increase. 17%

The Christine Ann Domestic Abuse shelter was over capacity 147% more nights in 2009. Staff spent 28% more time with clients-a trend that continues.

PAVE is now filling gaps for other social service providers. All while, it provides 60% more shelter nights.

PADA's hotline The Women's Center calls are up 35% had to turn away 550 this year. The victims and children average shelter because the shelter stav has inor program lacked creased 29%. capacity.

The impact of the economy in Rock County means more victims are relying on the YWCA. Yet, it may be forced to cut

Shelter stay at the Beloit DV Center

In the first 3 months of 2010. Rainbow House surpassed the number of shelter nights it offered to victims in all of 2009.

–Alexandra

Golden House provide refuge to 50 more vio tims in 2009, translating more vic to a year's worth of shelter nights. Still, 76 victims and their kids could not find shelter there because of a lack of capacity.

The shelter stays at the Manitowoc Co. DV Ctr have increased 30%. There are a record number of adults in shelter this year. surpassing a record in 2009.

10 people in Milwaukee County died because of domestic violence in 2009. Women & Children's Horizons offered 2,000 more hours of coun

seling (20%). Culturally specific services rose 57%. Funding for programs, like Batterers' Inter vention, was completely cut.

Bolton Refuge House's Buffalo Co. Outreach Office offered legal advocacy in three times as many restraining order cases and assisted with twice as many law enforce ment reports. Domestic Violence Domestic violence victim programs continue to offer lifesaving support to victims and their children, while facing increasing challenges. At a minimum, these programs require stable funding so that survivors can continue to find refuge and safety.

During the last few years of recession and slow economic recovery, domestic violence victim service providers have felt an increased demand for their services. During the last reporting period (Oct. 08– Sept.09), 40,822 women, children and men received lifesaving assistance, and over 135,000 hotline calls were answered. Yet, these totals do not tell the whole story of the recent strain on services.

## • More victims require emergency shelter and stay in shelter longer.

In a depressed economy, survivors in shelter are not able to quickly transition to living independently. Even survivors that do not have barriers to employment may have to wait several months or more before they can find a job and financially sustain themselves and their children with out the abuser.

- Last year, requests for shelter surged 109% at Domestic Abuse Intervention Services in Dane County. This was the largest increase in the agency's 33-year history.
  - This year, several shelters have already exceeded the number of shelter nights provided in all of 2009.
- The average shelter stay at many programs has dramatically increased. From Dodge County to Rheinlander to Beloit the average time survivors spent in shelter approximately doubled in 2009.

### • Survivors present with more complex cases that require more resources.

As other social service providers reduce services or require longer waits, domestic violence programs are doing more to help survivors create healthy and successful lives.

- Advocacy visits in Marshfield doubled.
- Advocates in Oshkosh spend about 30% more time with clients; this is typical of many other programs.
  - A number of programs report huge increases to time spent on legal issues, some over 100%.

### • Survivors are facing violence that is noticeably more severe and brutal.

Although not easily quantified, advocates nearly uniformly report a greater level of violence. This may be a result of victims staying with abusers longer for lack of alternatives.

• 2009 was a decade-high mark for domestic violence homicides.

### • Requests for needed services still go unmet.

Because of a lack of staff and resources, programs cannot provide services to all victims who are in danger.

- On one day in Wisconsin, 273 requests for domestic violence services went unmet.
- In Superior last year, 46 victims couldn't find refuge. 76 Green Bay victims went without shelter. In Waukesha, 550 individuals were turned away. Other programs have started waiting lists or are consistently over capacity.

### • Victims and programs have faced cuts and are at the limit.

Programs currently operate with bare minimums and cannot absorb more cuts.

- Only one program in Wisconsin compensates staff at rates comparable other social service agencies.
  - Many programs already operate in deficit.
  - Declining county funding directly resulted in cuts to services at a number of programs.