

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING
THE NEEDS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS
WITHIN THE TANF PROGRAM:
THE EXPERIENCE OF SEVEN COUNTIES

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION (CHAPTER 1)

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193; PRWORA) changed the fundamental structure of welfare. It created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, eliminating the entitlement nature of cash assistance. It imposed lifetime limits on receipt of assistance, and demanded that far more recipients engage in much greater levels of work activity. The Act imposed performance standards on states, and specified potential sanctions for failing to meet the standards.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has responsibility to provide guidance and technical assistance to states about how they might address the issues surrounding domestic violence in the caseloads of the TANF and child support enforcement programs. In September 1997 its Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation funded this project to increase the Department's ability to provide timely and relevant information to states. The project was also designed to give DHHS feedback on how welfare reform is progressing in relation to this highly focused issue, contributing to the Secretary's priority on tracking domestic violence and welfare-to-work interactions. The Urban Institute and the Center for Impact Research (formerly Taylor Institute) jointly conducted the activities for this project.

In the TANF program, the permissible level of exemptions from work requirements is stringent enough to raise fears that more women would have legitimate reasons for non-participation than could be exempted. One such legitimate reason would be a well-founded risk of battering if the women participated in work activities. As PRWORA was being debated, concerns were raised that its participation requirements might result in states' pressuring women to go to work, even if such behavior could put them in danger of abuse from partners who, for whatever reason, did not support these moves toward self-sufficiency on the women's part. Therefore the Family Violence Amendment (42 USC 602(a)(7)) allows states to adopt a Family Violence Option (FVO) to screen for domestic violence, refer or provide services, and exempt those clients who need it from program requirements. Other provisions allow states to waive requirements to establish paternity and identify absent parents for purposes of child support collection if doing so would expose the custodial parent and/or children to potential abuse.

THIS PROJECT

This project used several techniques to summarize existing information about domestic violence issues within TANF and child support enforcement caseloads, learn what states were doing about the FVO, and examine the day-to-day operations of TANF and child support programs surrounding the issue of domestic violence. The project first developed an **annotated**

bibliography of critical writings to serve as a primer for people interested in learning about domestic violence issues in the welfare setting. The Center for Impact Research conducted all-state surveys in early 1998 and early 1999 and wrote reports summarizing state TANF and child support agency responses to and actions regarding the FVO. The Urban Institute and Center for Impact Research held a conference in November 1998 to bring together states, counties, and experts to describe initial efforts to identify, assess, and address domestic violence issues in their TANF and child support caseloads. Finally, Urban Institute staff conducted site visits to seven counties in five states to learn how the FVO was being used in actual practice.

Both all-state surveys and site visits sought answers to the following questions: Did states and localities adopt the Family Violence Option? What are they doing about domestic violence in TANF caseloads? How, for instance, are they identifying clients for whom this is an issue? What are they using as screening tools? How are they getting clients to disclose their situation, especially when many clients have good reasons to keep their abuse secret? What are they doing with and for clients who are identified as at risk—do they simply exempt them from participation requirements, or do they offer some assistance that helps the clients move toward both freedom from violence and self-sufficiency? If the latter, what types of resources are being devoted to the task? Are states and localities, in following the route of exemption, further isolating the client rather than offering assistance that could be available to move toward more work involvement? Are TANF and child support enforcement offices pursuing the same strategies or different ones? Are they coordinating or not? Has the domestic violence advocacy and service community been involved in discussions with state or county officials responsible for these policies? With what result? If not, why not? What differences, if any, can be discerned in policies developed with and without advocate involvement, and what are the implications of the differences? What special mechanisms are being used to take children’s well-being into account as decisions are made about how to work with their mothers? And finally, how does the incentive structure for frontline workers affect what actually happens in TANF offices?

THE SITES (CHAPTERS 2 THROUGH 7)

This report focuses on findings from site visits (previous reports have summarized the all-state surveys — Raphael and Haennicke, 1998, 1999). We visited seven counties in five states. Sites were chosen to represent a variety of approaches to identifying, assessing, and addressing domestic violence issues within TANF and child support caseloads. Some sites visited have incorporated domestic violence as one issue in a broader approach to addressing barriers to work in TANF environments that have undergone major efforts to change the culture of the welfare office. Other sites were chosen because their approach to TANF is more typical of the country as a whole, and we wanted to see how the FVO was being implemented in these locations. The sites are presented in the order visited.

Anne Arundel County (Annapolis), Maryland

Maryland is a state-administered state in the mid-Atlantic region. Counties have flexibility to develop their own approach to TANF and domestic violence if they want to do so, within broad state guidelines. Anne Arundel County, a mostly suburban county containing the state capital of Annapolis, undertook its own “culture change” agenda as early as 1995. The goal was to alter the nature of the agency from eligibility determination and an attitude of “guarding the purse strings” to one of support and encouragement to assist applicants and customers in obtaining good jobs and achieving self-sufficiency. Staff were heavily involved in defining and implementing the original culture change, and also received specialized training on domestic violence when Maryland’s FVO was put in place. Coupled with the county’s early work to create overall culture change, the training helped to incorporate domestic violence-related procedures and attitudes with relative ease. Anne Arundel County will incorporate a woman’s activities related to resolving domestic violence issues as part of her self-sufficiency plan, and uses TANF and other funds extensively to provide facilitative and supportive services toward the goal of self-sufficiency, both before opening a cash assistance case and while the case is open.

Douglas (Roseburg) and Multnomah (Portland) Counties, Oregon

Oregon is a state-administered state in the western region, with a strongly state-directed TANF program and approach to domestic violence. The two counties we visited, Douglas and Multnomah, were recommended by the staff of the statewide domestic violence coalition as excellent examples of how the FVO functions in Oregon. Douglas is a rural county in the southwest corner of the state, while Multnomah County is home to the state’s biggest city, Portland. In Portland we visited the Southeast District office, one of 10 serving the county. Oregon had also been in the process of making major changes in the culture of the welfare office when AFDC changed to TANF. Its implementation of a concern about domestic violence within TANF fit well within the overall emphasis on identifying and removing barriers to work and eventual self-sufficiency. Discovery and assessment procedures for domestic violence were incorporated into general intake and assessment procedures, and all districts were required to have a domestic violence point person on staff. One office we visited had a domestic violence advocate on site, while both offices used specialized caseloads and offered their case managers training and technical assistance to assist with clients who had domestic violence issues. Counties in Oregon may incorporate a woman’s activities related to resolving domestic violence issues as part of her self-sufficiency plan. They use TANF and other funds extensively to provide facilitative and supportive services toward the goal of self-sufficiency, both during the assessment period before opening a cash assistance case and while the case is open. In addition, Oregon has used TANF money to create a special fund to purchase supportive goods and services for survivors of domestic violence. Counties can use this resource to help women deal with domestic violence, even if the women will not ultimately qualify for TANF.

Shawnee County (Topeka), Kansas

The Topeka Area Office of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services is one of 11 regional offices administering TANF in Kansas, a small, state-administered mid-western state. It is also the site of a domestic violence pilot project called the OARS program (Orientation-Assessment-Referral-Safety), implemented beginning in February 1999. OARS was developed jointly by the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence and the Central Social and Rehabilitation Services office. The office has not undergone a major change in how it administers TANF as a result of the pilot. Instead, the office has integrated the activities of the OARS program into its existing structure. A domestic violence advocate is located on site in the TANF office. Participation in OARS is considered an allowable work activity as part of a self-sufficiency plan. TANF funds can be used in Kansas to purchase goods and services needed by clients to achieve or maintain job readiness or employment. These funds are also available to help women address issues that arise in relation to domestic violence.

Orange County (Orlando), Florida

Florida, a large southern state, is officially state-administered but in reality affords considerable autonomy to the 24 boards that oversee WAGES, Florida's TANF program. We visited Orlando, in Orange County, a fast-growing urban center in the middle of the state. Orange County's WAGES program has a multi-tiered approach. Eligibility is determined by the Department of Children and Families, who then refer clients to One-Stop Career Centers run by a private for-profit contractor. One-Stop Career Center staff work with clients to develop self-sufficiency plans. Florida's TANF plan does not include any activities as "allowable" that are not also "countable" as equivalent to federal definitions of work activity. Clients who are not quickly able to get jobs and identify barriers are referred to the Work First Plus program, which is designed to assess and address barriers to work including, if appropriate, domestic violence. This structure has the potential to let eligibility workers do their jobs with little change from pre-TANF days, and to put assessment and assistance with domestic violence and other barriers into the hands of social workers and others trained to help and interested in helping clients overcome their barriers.

City and County of Denver, Colorado

Colorado is a mid-sized, county-administered state in the mountain region of the country. The state only adopted the FVO in 1999. Counties have considerable autonomy to design their own TANF program within the broad structure set by the state. The City and County of Denver Department of Human Services administers the local TANF program, called Colorado Works. Colorado has identified domestic violence as one of the areas of focus for county TANF offices. Denver DHS has initiated efforts to address domestic violence through screening and assessment efforts, as well as funding on-site domestic violence advocates for follow-up services. Denver

DHS has been more proactive in addressing domestic violence than many other counties in Colorado, but is still engaged in an effort to shift its TANF focus from eligibility to assisting clients with necessary services to reduce barriers to work. It is trying to make domestic violence services effective in this environment, which to date has not seen major changes in its welfare perspective and culture.

El Paso County (Colorado Springs), Colorado

El Paso County is Colorado's second most populous county, and includes its second-largest city, Colorado Springs. El Paso County's Department of Human Services (DHS) has structured its cash and other assistance programs in a manner designed to provide the most active help possible to families and other clients who may need them, in an office culture changed significantly from the old eligibility determination model. It has gone quite far in the degree to which it integrates its approach to families however they connect to the department (through TANF, child welfare, or other cash and non-cash assistance). Its approach to domestic violence is likewise integrated across programs, including the police response. As with the other two "culture change" sites we visited, the atmosphere and approach of El Paso County's TANF program make it relatively easy for clients to disclose domestic violence and get help to deal with it.

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS (CHAPTER 8)

Overall Program Philosophy

A state's or county's basic approach to TANF played a critical role in determining the nature and success of its approach to domestic violence issues in the sites we visited. Sites may be characterized by the relative emphasis their approach placed on "carrots" and "sticks" to prompt TANF applicants and clients toward employment and eventual departure from the TANF rolls. In the TANF case, "carrots" are positive incentives and supports to move toward self-sufficiency, including a relatively liberal list of activities that "count" in the state's or county's program, and the use of TANF funds to help remove barriers that would prevent self-sufficiency. "Sticks" available to TANF are the rules of engagement (shorter or longer time frame before work is required, stringency of the work requirement, and speed and severity of sanctioning for noncompliance).

The programs that did the best at identifying domestic violence issues were those set up to identify *all* major barriers to self-sufficiency — that is, those with a strong orientation to use "carrots." Programs focused more on immediate employment rather than on longer-term self-sufficiency were not well set up to identify any type of barrier, and the same was true for domestic violence issues.

Tools for Identifying and Assessing Domestic Violence

Programs used many different “tools” to identify clients with domestic violence issues and address their needs. The first of these was the overall ambiance of the TANF office. Anti-violence posters in the waiting rooms, along with brochures and other information about domestic violence services side by side with brochures for every other variety of self-help, training, or service program or activity in which clients might be interested, conveyed the message that this was a safe place to talk.

Other tools were a clearly phrased screening question or two as part of the initial application for aid, plus a more extensive domestic violence screener used once a worker had some indication that the client might have domestic violence issues. Questions asking for disclosure should be preceded with information about the TANF office’s interest in identifying barriers to work and helping clients address these obstacles. Further, a TANF program, and TANF workers, should never pose these questions to clients without commitments to (1) inform clients about how the information will be used, and (2) use the information in confidence to assure the client’s safety. A final set of tools was embedded in the TANF procedures of some of the programs we visited. This was the ability to include domestic violence-related activities as “allowable” work activities.

Even with all these tools in place, worker training was essential to assure that they would be used, and used appropriately. Using them at all requires that workers feel comfortable asking the questions, getting the answers, and discussing the issues. Achieving this level of comfort takes a major and ongoing effort. Further, comfort is only one of the issues to which training can contribute. Training gives workers the understanding to interpret clues and indicators, to probe carefully and understand correctly, and to remain non-judgmental but supportive.

Resources for Supporting Women with Domestic Violence Issues

Many of the TANF programs we visited had created a wide variety of resources to support their clients with domestic violence issues. These included arranging for the on-site availability of domestic violence expertise, using TANF funds for supportive services, developing smooth relationships with community partners for the provision of specialized services, providing related supportive services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, options for “what counts” as participation and cooperation, the credentials and experiences of staff, and arrangements that concentrate specialized resources on clients with particular problems (such as organization into specialized caseloads).

Making the Change to Focus on Domestic Violence as a Barrier

Even in the programs that had undertaken major culture change for TANF in general, some workers were still reluctant to address domestic violence issues. Reasons included not

understanding domestic violence, having unresolved domestic violence issues in their own lives, and not feeling comfortable discussing the issue with clients due to lack of domestic violence-specific training. Programs that did less, taking a few steps — such as doing minimal training and bringing in an on-site domestic violence advocate — but not making the necessary investment to change the orientation of most workers, had very inconsistent practice.

Several practices helped make the transition smoother, more consistent, and more accepted. One of these was attention to **the incentive structures faced by caseworkers**. If workers are penalized every time one of their clients is not engaged in either job search or work activity, their motivation to discover and address domestic violence issues is not likely to be high. Jurisdictions that accept activities addressing the reduction of domestic violence as a barrier to work help these caseworkers to accept a focus on domestic violence.

On-site domestic violence advocates have helped greatly in many but not all sites. Conditions under which they work best appear to be when:

- They are operating in an environment focused on barrier reduction;
- They have the full support of agency leadership;
- If TANF staff, they have received adequate training and technical assistance related to domestic violence;
- Training for TANF staff is provided by the on-site domestic violence advocates, at least in part, to let TANF staff get to know and trust the advocate(s) and establish a habit of interacting with them;
- The domestic violence advocates spend significant portions of their day and week at the TANF agency (preferably full time at a big agency);
- The roles and responsibilities of the on-site domestic violence advocates with respect to TANF staff have been carefully specified and discussed with all parties;
- The on-site domestic violence advocates are integrated into the activities of TANF staff, attending staff meetings, retreats, trainings, etc., and have the full support of TANF administrators; and
- Care is taken that the on-site domestic violence advocates maintain good working relationships with the domestic violence service agency and its staff, so they do not end up feeling isolated from their own colleagues.

Some programs have gone farther than others toward **integrating child support into the TANF application process**. In the programs focused on maximizing the resources of applicants and clients to shorten or eliminate the need for TANF, child support is perceived as an important source of both immediate and ongoing cash. **Maintaining confidentiality of information shared by clients about domestic violence**, and the need to **protect clients from inadvertent disclosure of her whereabouts** as part of child support proceedings are difficult issues to resolve to everyone's satisfaction. But they are essential to address if the central premise of the FVO, not to contribute to a woman's further endangerment, is to be honored.

IMPLICATIONS

One of this project's central purposes was to identify promising approaches being used by state and county TANF and child support enforcement programs to assure that program requirements do not create or increase danger to people in domestic violence situations. We found the most promising approaches to be those integrated into a general culture change aimed at moving welfare offices toward promoting long-term self-sufficiency among their clients. However, since most TANF programs have not made this type of culture change, we also examined approaches that have some promise in more average TANF environments. These included on-site domestic violence advocates, designating activities addressing domestic violence as "allowable" work activities, and creating a screening and assessment structure that largely bypasses the eligibility determination process. As with other aspects of promising approaches, the function of formal FVO waivers varied considerably by the type of program operating in a jurisdiction.

The FVO in the TANF Programs We Visited

The remedies offered by federal statute and regulations — the FVO waiver and the good cause child support exemption — were not used much in the counties we visited. Most had developed an approach they felt to be more productive, and one less consuming of agency resources. The general approach, with variations in each site, combined (1) an expanded array of activities allowable within a client's self-sufficiency plan, and (2) caseworker flexibility to make these decisions rather than requiring a formal waiver application to cover the things a woman can accomplish within the time frame of a two- to four-week waiver.

The FVO in Other TANF Programs

Some states have set up complex and formal procedures through which clients may request a waiver of various program requirements under a state's FVO. These procedures may exist side by side with more flexible approaches to handling domestic violence situations, as they do in Colorado. Or, they may be the major route through which TANF clients may seek relief if they feel that program requirements place them in danger. Massachusetts, for instance, which had one of the federal demonstration grants to implement the FVO, is one of these. We understand from presentations at conferences that TANF programs set up with very formal waiver processes, such as the one in Massachusetts, process relatively few waivers, virtually all of which are for quite short periods of time. Nevertheless, the option of applying for and granting a waiver may be critically important for the relatively few TANF clients whose domestic violence-related issues cannot be settled quickly. If a domestic violence survivor or her children needed to participate in counseling or therapy for an extended period of time, or needed time to recover from injuries over a period of months, a formal waiver might protect her from running out of cash assistance benefits at the end of the federal or state-imposed time limit on benefit receipt.

Other Functions of the FVO

The Family Violence Amendment has caused each state to examine its current practice with respect to the treatment of domestic violence survivors who apply for or are recipients of TANF. Further, each state has had to make a conscious legislative decision about whether or not to adopt the FVO. The need to do so has raised the issue of domestic violence and remedies for it to a level of political debate and consideration that it might not have achieved in many communities in this country without the stimulus of federal legislation.

An additional benefit of the FVO is the leverage it gives legal advocates when a person with significant barriers to work due to domestic violence is being pressured by a TANF program to fulfill stringent work requirements or face a sanction. Cases exist in which legal advocates have been able to secure waivers for their clients when the state allowed them but a local TANF office was not operating in the spirit of the state's FVO legislation.

Finally, as noted earlier in this chapter, formal state adoption of the FVO gives states a certain amount of flexibility with regard to federal TANF regulations. With a formal FVO in place, a state may be able to obtain relief from potential federal penalties for failure to meet work participation rates, or be allowed to carry more than 20 percent of its caseload past the 60-month federal lifetime limit without penalty.

Good Cause Exemptions for Child Support

With respect to good cause exemption from cooperating with child support enforcement, there is even stronger evidence that additional or expanded remedies would be desirable. The results of several studies (Pearson, Thoennes, and Griswold, 1999; Pearson and Griswold, 1997) indicate that the vast majority of women *want* the income from child support and further, they *want the man to pay*. What they fear is that he will find them, and that they or their children will suffer harm as a result. An appropriate remedy would assure that the woman's whereabouts would be protected, but that the state would pursue child support. This seems hard to accomplish, as discussed in chapter 7, because of court procedures and the public nature of the information in court orders.

CHAPTER 1

STUDY PURPOSE AND METHODS

Since the days when the social service and cash assistance functions of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) were administratively separated until the advent of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the main job of income maintenance programs has been to determine the eligibility of families for cash assistance. Even mandatory participation in job training or welfare-to-work activities affected small proportions of the caseload. Further, states did not face federally imposed performance standards for the proportion of the caseload required to be in employment, or potential sanctions if these standards were not met. Welfare agencies never had to deal directly with manifestations of domestic violence in their caseload, although anecdotal reports from welfare-to-work programs mentioned the role of partner violence in sabotaging women's efforts to attend education or training activities, or to retain a job. Reasons behind dropping out of these programs were sometimes found to involve domestic violence or the woman's reasonable belief that her own or her children's safety was in danger if she did not stop her work-related activities. Such dropouts rarely, if ever, resulted in state-imposed sanctions.

However, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193; PRWORA) changed the fundamental structure of welfare. It created the TANF program, eliminating the entitlement nature of cash assistance. It imposed lifetime limits on receipt of assistance, and demanded that far more recipients engage in much greater levels of work activity. The Act imposed performance standards on states, and specified potential sanctions for failing to meet the standards.

The permissible level of exemptions from work requirements contained in the Act (20 percent of current caseload) is stringent enough to raise fears that more women would have legitimate reasons for non-participation than could be exempted. One such legitimate reason would be a well-founded risk of battering if the women participated in work activities. As the Act was being debated, concerns were raised that its participation requirements might result in states' pressuring women to go to work, even if such behavior could put them in danger of abuse from partners who, for whatever reason, did not support these moves toward self-sufficiency on the women's part. Therefore the Family Violence Amendment to PRWORA (42 USC 602(a)(7)) allows states to adopt a Family Violence Option (FVO) to screen for domestic violence, refer or provide services, and exempt those clients who need it from program requirements. Other provisions of the Act allow states to waive requirements to establish paternity and identify absent parents for purposes of child support collection if doing so would expose the custodial parent and/or children to potential abuse. These provisions built on already existing procedures for establishing a good cause exemption from child support requirements.

In fall 1997, when this project began, only a few studies had explored the prevalence of domestic violence among AFDC caseloads and the extent to which it has in the past or might in the future affect recipients' ability to attend school or work preparation activities. Several of these studies included comparison groups of non-welfare respondents, and were able to document higher rates of abuse among welfare recipients. Raphael and Tolman (1997) summarized ten studies that include some type of prevalence data.

There exist other, less quantitative, writings that discuss the issues involved in welfare-to-work efforts when domestic violence is present or might be present, but these have not been summarized or accumulated in a single, accessible document. Further, there was much to learn simply about what states and localities are doing in response to the domestic violence-related provisions of P.L. 104-193. Did they adopt the Family Violence Option or not? In either case, what are they doing about domestic violence in their TANF caseloads? How, for instance, are they identifying women for whom this is an issue? What are they using as screening tools? How are they getting the women to disclose their situation, especially when many women have good reasons to keep their abuse secret? What are they doing with and for women who are identified as at risk—do they simply exempt these women from participation requirements, or do they offer some assistance that helps the women move toward both freedom from violence and self-sufficiency? If the latter, what types of resources are states devoting to the task? There is some danger that, by following the simpler route of exemption, states will contribute to further isolating the woman and denying her the assistance that could be available to move toward more work involvement.

What are states thinking about these dilemmas, and toward what resolution do they seem to be leaning? Are TANF and child support enforcement offices pursuing the same strategies or different ones? Are they coordinating or not? Has the domestic violence advocacy and service community been involved in discussions with state or county officials responsible for these policies? With what result? If not, why not? What differences, if any, can be discerned in policies developed with and without advocate involvement, and what are the implications of the differences? What special mechanisms are being used to take children's well-being into account as decisions are made about how to work with their mothers? And finally, how does the incentive structure for front-line workers affect what actually happens in TANF offices?

THE PROJECT

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has responsibility to provide guidance and technical assistance to states about how they might address the issues surrounding domestic violence in the TANF and child support enforcement caseloads. In September 1997 its Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) funded this project to help answer some of the questions posed above, and give the Department material that would contribute to its ability to provide timely and relevant information to states. The project was also designed to give DHHS feedback on how welfare reform is progressing in relation to this highly

focused issue, feeding into the Secretary's priority on tracking domestic violence and welfare-to-work interactions. The project was a joint undertaking of the Urban Institute and the Center for Impact Research (formerly Taylor Institute) through a subcontract. It had several parts, some of which have been summarized in previous publications.

Annotated Bibliography

The project's first task was to produce an annotated bibliography (Jacobs, 1998). This bibliography covered a highly selective set of writings that together provide useful background reading for policy makers, practitioners, and advocates needing to understand the issues involved in domestic violence within the TANF framework.

1998 and 1999 State Surveys

In early 1998, and again in early 1999, the Center for Impact Research conducted telephone surveys of TANF and child support enforcement offices in all states and the District of Columbia, to learn what states were doing to implement the Family Violence Option (FVO) or adopt other strategies to identify and support women victims of domestic violence (Raphael and Haennicke, 1998, 1999). At the time of the first survey, states were just beginning to grapple with these issues. It was hoped that assembling and publishing a summary of their experiences could help all states understand their options and develop better policies. The first survey found relatively little to report, so the project was extended to include a second survey a year later. As with any new area that is undergoing rapid development, issues related to the handling of domestic violence within TANF and child support enforcement caseloads will probably continue to need examination over the next few years, as states gain experience with identifying relevant women in their caseloads and experiment with the best ways to protect and also to help them.

1998 Conference

In November 1998, the Urban Institute and the Center for Impact Research invited representatives of eight states, three model demonstration projects, and domestic violence advocates to a small conference in Washington, D.C. The conference brought together people working to implement the FVO or other practices designed to identify and support women victims of domestic violence in the TANF and child support enforcement systems. States were selected because they represented various issues and practices related to the FVO, including some that were achieving relatively high disclosure rates, some that offered their employees extensive training, some that had significant linkages between TANF and child support enforcement, some that had developed specialized caseloads or caseworkers, and some that simply were very large and complicated. The goals were to learn from each other, inform federal staff about the issues and/or difficulties of implementing the FVO, identify issues that should be

explored in site visits, make suggestions for evaluating the impact of the FVO, and discuss strategies for implementing the FVO.

Issues emerging from this conference in part formed the basis of our site visit goals. These included the structure of the entire TANF application process (including the staff and program incentive structures), procedures for screening and assessment, factors affecting level of disclosure, women's reasons for and against disclosure, consequences of and supportive services following disclosure, staff training issues, and evaluation issues (evidence for the effectiveness of the approach).

The Site Visits

The last component of this project has been to conduct site visits to locations that could be identified as offering promising practices in implementing the FVO and good cause exemptions from child support enforcement. Nothing brings home the issues involved in establishing a new practice better than seeing it in action. Site visits give researchers the opportunity to do this, as well as to ask everyone involved for their perceptions, understandings, and assessments of the new practice. Our goal in these site visits was to understand the policy positions of the state and locality visited, and to interview directors, managers, frontline workers, and clients in TANF, child support enforcement, and domestic violence agencies. We wanted to know "how it worked" from the perspective of each of these respondents. We wanted to be able to answer all or most of the questions posed above (p. 1-2).

We waited as long as possible to select and visit sites because we wanted to go to places where something was actually happening with respect to addressing domestic violence issues among TANF clients and applicants. To be able to observe actual practice rather than theory, we wanted to go to TANF agencies whose approach to domestic violence had been operating for a reasonable amount of time, and that had used the approach with a reasonable number of clients. We also wanted to go to places that did not already have an evaluation of their approach to FVO in place. This criterion left out a number of sites that had implemented their approach under federal demonstration grants (although we learned a lot from the experiences of these programs about the issues involved in developing a comprehensive approach to domestic violence issues). Given these basics, which did not leave many places to choose from, we tried to achieve maximum variety on the following criteria for site selection:

- Size of the state, region of the country, urban/rural location of the county;
- State versus county administration of the TANF program;
- Approach of the state's TANF program;
- Approach or model used to identify the need for domestic violence-related services; and
- Approach or model used to deliver domestic violence-related services.

With our criteria in mind, we used a number of sources to identify potential sites to visit, including:

- The list of demonstration sites funded by the Office for Community Services, Administration for Children and Families, of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop an approach to domestic violence issues within TANF programs;
- State and county programs identified by the Center for Impact Research through its two all-state surveys for this project (described above) and other contacts;
- Presentations at the April 1999 “Trapped by Poverty, Trapped by Abuse” conference co-sponsored by the Center for Impact Research and the University of Michigan’s Center on Poverty, Risk, and Mental Health;
- Nominations by Urban Institute staff conducting site visits for several welfare reform and welfare-to-work evaluations.

We were able to visit seven counties in five states. The first three counties visited, Anne Arundel County in Maryland and Douglas and Multnomah Counties in Oregon, were highly recommended as locations that had undertaken significant changes in their welfare programs, accompanied by major efforts to change the culture of the welfare office. The following are thumbnail sketches of the TANF programs and their domestic violence-related activities in these three counties:

- Maryland is a small, state-administered state in the mid-Atlantic region. Counties have flexibility to develop their own approach to TANF and domestic violence if they want to do so, within broad state guidelines. Anne Arundel County, a mostly suburban county containing the state capital of Annapolis, undertook its own “culture change” agenda as early as 1995. The goal was to alter the nature of the agency from eligibility determination and an attitude of “guarding the purse strings” to one of support and encouragement to assist applicants and customers in obtaining good jobs and achieving self-sufficiency. Staff were heavily involved in defining and implementing the original culture change, and also received specialized training on domestic violence when Maryland’s FVO was put in place. Coupled with the county’s early work to create overall culture change, the training helped to incorporate domestic violence-related procedures and attitudes with relative ease. Anne Arundel County will incorporate a woman’s activities related to resolving domestic violence issues as part of her self-sufficiency plan, and uses TANF and other funds extensively to provide facilitative and supportive services toward the goal of self-sufficiency, both before opening a cash assistance case and while the case is open.
- Oregon is a mid-sized, state-administered state in the western region, with a strongly state-directed TANF program and approach to domestic violence. The two counties we visited, Douglas and Multnomah, were recommended by the staff of the statewide domestic violence coalition as excellent examples of how the FVO functions in Oregon. Douglas is a rural county in the southwest corner of the state, while Multnomah County is

home to the state's biggest city, Portland. In Portland we visited the Southeast Branch office, one of 10 serving the county. Oregon had also been in the process of making major changes in the culture of the welfare office when AFDC changed to TANF. Its implementation of a concern about domestic violence within TANF fit well within the overall emphasis on identifying and removing barriers to work and eventual self-sufficiency. Discovery and assessment procedures for domestic violence were incorporated into general intake and assessment procedures, and all districts were required to have a domestic violence point person on staff. One office we visited had a domestic violence advocate on site, while both offices used specialized caseloads and offered their case managers training and technical assistance to assist with clients who had domestic violence issues. Counties in Oregon may incorporate a woman's activities related to resolving domestic violence issues as part of her self-sufficiency plan. They use TANF and other funds extensively to provide facilitative and supportive services toward the goal of self-sufficiency, both during the assessment period before opening a cash assistance case and while the case is open. In addition, Oregon has used TANF money to create a special fund to purchase supportive goods and services for survivors of domestic violence. Counties can use this resource to help women deal with domestic violence, even if the women will not ultimately qualify for TANF.

When we returned from these site visits, we considered the most useful approach to selecting additional sites. It was clear that TANF programs committed to reducing poverty and promoting longer-term self-sufficiency, which in pursuit of these goals made a serious effort to identify and address barriers to work, could with relative ease incorporate protections for women facing domestic violence issues. However, it was also clear that there were not many such TANF programs in the United States. It was further clear that many states and counties would find it difficult or impossible to make major changes in the culture of their TANF offices, even if they were motivated to do so. Therefore, we decided that the remaining sites visited for this project should be operating TANF programs closer to the average, and that we should examine how the FVO was being implemented in those environments. For this reason we chose to visit (1) Topeka/Shawnee County, which was serving as a pilot site for Kansas' approach to the FVO; (2) Orlando/Orange County, which had set up a service structure to which regular eligibility/intake workers could refer applicants identified as having *any type of barrier to work* for further assessment and assistance; and (3) the city and county of Denver, which was trying to use barrier assessment procedures and on-site domestic violence advocates in what was still a fairly traditional welfare setting. In addition, we added El Paso County to our Colorado trip as another example of major culture change and integration of TANF program supports with other aspects of human services departments (in particular, child welfare).

- The Topeka Area Office of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services is one of 11 regional offices administering TANF in Kansas, a small, state-administered mid-western state. It is also the site of a domestic violence pilot project called the OARS program (Orientation-Assessment-Referral-Safety), implemented beginning in February 1999. OARS was developed jointly by the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and

Domestic Violence and the Central Social and Rehabilitation Services office. The office has not undergone a major change in how it administers TANF as a result of the pilot. Instead, the office has integrated the activities of the OARS program into its existing structure. A domestic violence advocate is located on site in the TANF office. Participation in OARS is considered an allowable work activity as part of a self-sufficiency plan. TANF funds can be used in Kansas to purchase goods and services needed by clients to achieve or maintain job readiness or employment. These funds are also available to help women address issues that arise in relation to domestic violence.

- Florida, a large southern state, is officially state-administered but in reality affords considerable autonomy to the 24 boards that oversee WAGES, Florida's TANF program. We visited Orlando, in Orange County, a fast-growing urban center in the middle of the state. Orange County's WAGES program has a multi-tiered approach. Eligibility is determined by the Department of Children and Families, who then refer clients to One-Stop Career Centers run by a private for-profit contractor. One-Stop Career Center staff work with clients to develop self-sufficiency plans. Florida's TANF plan does not include any activities as "allowable" that are not also "countable" as equivalent to federal definitions of work activity. Clients who are not quickly able to get jobs and identify barriers to work are referred to the Work First Plus program, which is designed to assess and address barriers to work including, if appropriate, domestic violence. This structure has the potential to let eligibility workers do their jobs with little change from pre-TANF days, and to put assessment and assistance with domestic violence and other barriers into the hands of social workers and others trained to help and interested in helping clients overcome their barriers.
- Colorado is a mid-sized, county-administered state in the mountain region of the country. The state only adopted the FVO in 1999. Counties have considerable autonomy to design their own TANF program within the broad structure set by the state. We visited Colorado's two biggest counties, Denver and El Paso (Colorado Springs).
 - § The city and county of Denver Department of Human Services administers the local TANF program, called Colorado Works. Colorado has identified domestic violence as one of the areas of focus for county TANF offices. Denver DHS has initiated efforts to address domestic violence through screening and assessment efforts, as well as funding on-site domestic violence advocates for follow-up services. Denver DHS has been more proactive in addressing domestic violence than many other counties in Colorado, but is still engaged in an effort to shift its TANF focus from eligibility to assisting clients with necessary services to reduce barriers to work. It is trying to make domestic violence services effective in this environment, which to date has not seen major changes in its welfare perspective and culture.

§ El Paso County is Colorado's second most populous county and includes its second-largest city, Colorado Springs. El Paso County's Department of Human Services (DHS) has structured its cash and other assistance programs in a manner designed to provide the most active help possible to families and other clients who may need them, in an office culture changed significantly from the old eligibility determination model. It has gone quite far in the degree to which it integrates its approach to families however they connect to the department (through TANF, child welfare, or other cash and non-cash assistance). Its approach to domestic violence is likewise integrated across programs, including the police response. As with the other two "culture change" sites we visited, the atmosphere and approach of El Paso County's TANF program make it relatively easy for clients to disclose domestic violence and get help to deal with it.

During each site visit we conducted interviews and tried to observe client intake and assessment procedures with several clients and TANF workers. We tried to interview the following types of people (although in some sites we were not able to conduct all of these interviews, for various reasons):

- Management and mid-level supervisors in the county/local TANF program;
- Frontline TANF workers representing all the functions of intake, assessment, and ongoing case management;
- Domestic violence advocates stationed in TANF offices, domestic violence point persons among TANF staff, and representatives of community-based domestic violence service providers;
- Child support enforcement managers and frontline workers;
- Clients who had domestic violence issues during the time they were applying for or enrolled in TANF; and
- State administrators concerned with the FVO, if appropriate.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

Chapters 2 through 7 present the findings of specific site visits. Each site has its own chapter with the exception of the two locations we visited in Oregon. In that state, the state's influence was strong enough for us to treat the two locations as variations on the themes set by the state. Chapter 8 summarizes major findings and themes, and draws out implications for further development of FVO and other approaches to helping women in the TANF program who have domestic violence issues.

CHAPTER 2

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND

Anne Arundel County's Department of Social Services (DSS) has structured its cash and other assistance programs so as to be most helpful to families and other customers who may need them. In this atmosphere, learning about domestic violence and offering customers help in dealing with it is handled as an integral part of identifying and resolving every type of barrier to work and to self-sufficiency. The county has created the ability to use TANF and other funds in whatever way will be most likely to help a family move forward, including resolving domestic violence-related problems. Anne Arundel County DSS is quite unique among county Departments of Social Services in Maryland in its approach to assistance, despite operating officially as a branch of a state-administered cash assistance program.

We visited Anne Arundel County in August 1999, where we spoke with the DSS deputy director, child support workers, job counselors, caseworkers who did TANF intake, adult services staff, and the director and staff from the county's domestic violence service provider. We also observed the TANF intake and assessment process in the county's two job centers, as well as a domestic violence "staffing" for a prospective TANF client. The information summarized in this chapter is based on these interviews and observations, plus documents supplied by DSS.

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

Anne Arundel County is located on the Chesapeake Bay about 20 miles east of the U.S. Capitol, and stretches from the Baltimore suburbs south to the Calvert County line. It includes Annapolis, the capital of Maryland. The southern half of the county is about 40 percent rural; the northern half, from Annapolis up, is heavily suburban and includes most of the county's population.

As of 1999, 480,000 people are estimated to live in Anne Arundel County, of whom 83 percent are white and 15 percent are African American. There is a growing Hispanic population that has not yet shown up in Census data, which indicates 2.3 percent Hispanic. The county's estimated poverty rate for 1996 was 5.4 percent for all persons, and 7.5 percent for children (persons under 18). Median household income in 1996 was \$53,037, and per capita income was \$18,509. Female-headed households with children account for 5 percent of all households. The average unemployment rate for 1999 was an extremely low 2.8 percent.

STATE TANF PROGRAM, AND ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY VARIATIONS

Maryland's TANF program is called Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA). Maryland is a state-administered state, and Anne Arundel County TCA staff are state employees. However, county

TCA offices have a lot of flexibility in the way they administer the program, and Anne Arundel County has used this flexibility to the maximum degree.

Maryland's TCA has a five-year time limit and a two-year time trigger, meaning that customers can receive benefits for 24 months before they have to participate in work activity. The rest of the state appears to wait until customers are approaching their second year of support before starting to apply pressure to participate in work activity. However, Anne Arundel County begins its emphasis on work activity the day that a potential customer walks through the door.

Customers eligible for TCA must still wait 30 days in Anne Arundel County before receiving cash assistance (unless there are good reasons, such as domestic violence, why they need cash immediately). During the 30-day waiting period, the county does everything it can to help the customer obtain enough resources to render cash assistance unnecessary. Potential resources include child support, child care subsidies, food stamps, Medicaid, and employment. If these are not enough, the staff assess the family's eligibility for a welfare avoidance (diversion) grant.

Work Activity, Exceptions, and Exemptions

Job Search, Next Step (extended job search plus job club), unsubsidized employment, and preparation for the GED exam count as work activities. Categories of "Exempt" people, during 1998 and before, included those who were pregnant, had children under one year of age, had domestic violence or substance abuse issues, were needed to care for someone at home, were short-term disabled, long-term disabled, and/or an SSI applicant. In 1999, Anne Arundel County switched to calling all but the last two categories "excused" from job search because the state had to adopt the 24-month federal work requirement.

For many of these "excused" categories, Anne Arundel County still pushes for maximum labor force participation. People with domestic violence or substance abuse issues must develop a "work plan" that shows how they are working to resolve these issues. They must report monthly that they are carrying out those plans, just as they would have to report their job search activities if their plan had an employment goal. People with disabilities are sent for a formal vocational assessment to a nearby center run by Goodwill Industries together with a local developmental disabilities nonprofit organization. For 20 percent of these individuals, who thought they could not work, the county has been able to help them get jobs. Another 38 percent were able to secure another source of income and leave the TCA rolls. By trying to get everyone into work from the very beginning, the DSS deputy director feels that she will have excellent documentation of inability to work whenever she has to declare that a customer should be considered part of the 20 percent of caseload exempt from the federal 60-month lifetime limit.

Sanctions

Maryland has a fairly severe sanction policy. The entire grant terminates at the first instance of noncompliance with work requirements or cooperation with child support, and is reinstated immediately once compliance is obtained. A second instance of noncompliance brings about termination of the entire grant until 10 days after compliance, and subsequent instances result in termination until 30 days after compliance. A 30-day investigation/conciliation period follows evidence of noncompliance and precedes imposition of the sanction. Left over from pre-TANF practice are also partial sanctions for failure to comply with behavioral requirements for school attendance, children's immunizations, and participation in substance abuse treatment (if relevant).

State-Only Plan

Beginning in July 1999, Maryland has a state-only TCA program designed for people who are working and receiving the earned income disregard of 35 percent of their earnings. These customers are transferred to a 100 percent state-funded cash assistance grant, and their months of receiving assistance no longer count against the 60-month federal TANF maximum. Other, smaller, state-only cash assistance programs began in 1998 for TANF recipients who appeared unlikely to be able to work after being on aid for 24 months.

CUSTOMER FLOW, INTERACTION OF TCA WORKERS WITH CUSTOMERS, AND PRESSURE POINTS

Anne Arundel County's TCA offices are incorporated into two Job Centers, one in Annapolis in mid-county, and one in Glen Burnie in the northern part of the county. Job Centers are open to the public (not just applicants for public assistance) on a walk-in basis. They are the hubs through which a person accesses most of the types of government assistance administered through the county. The Job Centers maintain lists of job openings and training and educational opportunities, have Internet access for people who want to search for jobs, and resume writing facilities for people who need to develop or update a resume. They are also the location where one begins to apply for food stamps, Medicaid, child support, child care, and other forms of assistance, as well as TCA.

People walk into the Job Center, are greeted by a receptionist, and are asked what they want. If they only want to look at the employment opportunities, use the resume writing or other job-related services on their own, they do so, without filling out any other paperwork. DSS calls these people "self-referrals." If they want to apply for any type of assistance or service, they fill out a one-page assessment form.

Anyone applying for assistance is seen first by a child support worker, who is part of a program called Child Support First. The worker ascertains whether child support is an issue (that is, whether there is a child in the household with an absent parent who could/should be contributing to support). If yes, the worker ascertains whether paternity has been established, a child support order is in effect, and child support is being paid. If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” the child support worker gathers the information to get them established and functioning. The prospective customer can get food stamps and some other benefits without cooperating with child support, but not TCA or child care unless there is “good cause” for failing to reveal the name or whereabouts of the child(ren)’s father(s). Domestic violence is a potential “good cause.”

After seeing the child support worker, the prospective customer sees a job counselor. The job counselor determines whether the customer is working and if yes, at what and for how much. If the customer is not working, the job counselor determines why not. If any of the “why not’s” are things the county can assist with (child care, transportation, getting a car fixed, clothing, etc.), the appropriate supports are offered. Sometimes this is enough to move the customer into employment.

All unemployed and underemployed customers are immediately enrolled in job search. Anne Arundel County treats Job Search as mandatory unless the customer is “excused” or “exempt.” Even if the customer falls into one of these categories, she or he must still make some effort toward obtaining and maintaining employment. If a customer is already working at least part time, job counselors may also offer opportunities for improving skills, getting licenses and certifications, and going to school. The job counselor’s goal, as much as possible, is to get people to work at “good” jobs (those with living-wage salaries and health benefits) and to get them into careers.

Only after the customer sees the child support worker and the job counselor does s/he see a caseworker, who helps with applications for all benefits. Regardless of what type(s) of benefit a customer comes into the Job Center wanting, the caseworker reviews eligibility for all benefits that DSS has to offer. One customer whose intake interview we observed came in for Medicaid and walked out with both Medicaid and food stamps.

Attitude of TCA Staff Toward Welfare Reform

The county’s TCA staff we interviewed reported being well prepared for welfare reform by major changes initiated starting in 1995. At that time, Maryland was thinking of applying for an AFDC waiver, and Anne Arundel County was going to be one of the participating counties. In preparation, the DSS director recognized that significant changes would be necessary in how DSS interacted with customers. Even though the waiver never materialized, Anne Arundel County decided to make a change. Staff visited other models, redesigned the whole structure of offices into the Job Center approach outlined above, and expanded the customer base to include men and women without children, as well as the traditional types of AFDC households. Anne

Arundel County applied for and received a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The grant focused on “culture change,” to transform the agency from an eligibility focus into one that could help customers meet their needs. The staff were invited to help design appropriate strategies to accomplish this change, and then to train each other in these staff-directed strategies. Within the first year of operating with the new philosophy, the department quadrupled job placements among AFDC applicants and recipients, and greatly changed the flavor of office. For instance, in February 1998 the Job Centers served 1,770 clients, of whom 37 percent were self-referrals, 58 percent only needed to get as far as the job counselor, and only 5 percent ended up with cash assistance. Coming as they did after the Anne Arundel County DSS staff had had a year or two of operating in the new “culture change” milieu, TANF requirements posed little challenge and required little change for Job Center workers.

All three of the workers that customers see initially, child support worker, job counselor, and caseworker, are considered welfare reform workers, and have fairly extensive interactions with customers. Further, the interactions we observed during two separate sessions (one in each office, with five or six different customers) were quite friendly and professional, motivated by a desire to find out what the customer needs and help them get it. We saw very little of the atmosphere of indifference and suspicion that is a common complaint about income maintenance offices.

Based on our observations of the intake and assessment process coupled with our interviews with staff, we would say that Anne Arundel County DSS’s efforts to change the culture of the welfare office into one of facilitation and a genuine spirit of “we’re here to help you” have worked. Anne Arundel County TCA staff feel their customers comply well with Job Center (including TCA) requirements. The Anne Arundel County program, and therefore the Anne Arundel County staff, exceed Maryland’s TCA requirements by a good deal.

Preparation for Handling Situations Involving Domestic Violence

In September 1996, Anne Arundel County received another grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to fund the design of domestic violence training for frontline workers. DSS contracted with the YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, which does all the domestic violence services for Anne Arundel County (see below), to develop and deliver the training curriculum to 150 DSS staff, including child care, child support, eligibility, job counseling, and child welfare workers.

The training took place in February 1997 and lasted three days. It was held at the YWCA to familiarize staff with that facility. Two of the three days consisted of training on the dynamics of domestic violence, legal procedures/options, and available domestic violence services in Anne Arundel County. Once they return from the training, staff also participate in role modeling activities by which they practice bringing up the subject of domestic violence with clients. According to the workers we interviewed, the training spoke to the fact that staff need to

empower customers to make their own decisions regarding their domestic violence situations and not interject the staff's own personal feelings or advice. The third day of training consisted of a four-hour "court-watch" during which staff witnessed *ex parte* and protective order hearings to give them a better understanding of what domestic violence victims experience in court.

The training received positive feedback from both DSS and Y staff. The DSS deputy director reported that the domestic violence training has equipped DSS staff with domestic violence awareness. However, the workers we interviewed agreed that training alone is not enough to make them feel comfortable addressing domestic violence with customers. Rather, they felt that the best way to improve their comfort level was through real experience talking about domestic violence with customers.

Refresher training sessions/training sessions for new staff are held two or three times a year and attended by approximately 20 workers each. For example, shortly before our visit the department held a summer refresher course for its staff covering assessment for domestic violence because Maryland law regarding "peace orders" had changed, and agency staff needed to know how this new tool could help customers.

In addition, Y staff have received some limited training from DSS on TANF regulations. The DSS deputy director spoke with non-residential service staff at the Y about what women experience at the DSS office and what the TANF program expects clients to do to remain in compliance with the program. However, Y staff still expressed to us their occasional confusion about TCA rules and regulations, which keep changing, and reported their feeling that further training would help them to give their clients the best advice.

INTEGRATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES INTO TCA INTAKE AND ONGOING PROCESSES

Maryland has an approved Family Violence Option. Waivers are allowed that excuse an applicant from the work requirement, and would serve as justification for extending the 60-month federal time limit were that to become an issue. Medical or legal verification of domestic violence is required, but if that is not available, verification from a domestic violence counselor is adequate. All applicants for cash assistance in Maryland are supposed to be informed about domestic violence services and screened for need as part of the application process, but screening for domestic violence varies by county. Each county is supposed to designate at least one in-house person as a family violence expert who has received additional training on this issue. The Maryland Department of Human Resources provides each office with funds for domestic violence training for staff.

Anne Arundel County has interpreted Maryland's FVO in its own way. Although it is an option to issue waivers, Anne Arundel County had not granted even one formal waiver at the time of our visit. Based on our observations, women were not told that waivers were an option. Instead,

attendance at domestic violence support groups, obtaining safe housing (including relocating), getting one's car fixed, and other activities to assure the customer's safety and security are paid for through TANF funds and allowed to count as work activities for the time a woman needs to remedy her situation sufficiently to participate in work activities. No categorical waivers are discussed with customers, because what is needed always depends on the individual person. Staff reported that most women disclosing domestic violence want to work and want child support. Exemption from work because of domestic violence is not usually perceived to be the appropriate option for women victims who are TCA customers. Anne Arundel County policy is always to encourage someone toward work, but to take domestic violence situations into account in developing individual work plans. The YWCA staff we interviewed said they support this strategy.

Anne Arundel County does not contract for a specialized domestic violence advocate to be co-located in its TCA offices. Rather, all staff interacting with customers are supposed to be trained to identify and discuss domestic violence. In addition, each office has designated a specially trained domestic violence point person within its Adult Services unit who is called in to help "staff" a case once domestic violence is identified (see below, "TCA Approach Following Disclosure"). This Adult Services specialist also has the responsibility for following up with the woman after staffing to assist in any way possible with safety and other domestic violence-related concerns.

Official policy is that Anne Arundel County's TCA offices tell every applicant about provisions regarding domestic violence and other exemptions or "excuses." The staff are trained to find out what women's problems are and how to address them. Each of the three workers with whom a customer interacts (child support, job counselor, and caseworker) has the opportunity to inform the customer of provisions if her safety is threatened by domestic violence, and to ask whether this is an issue for her. The office uses what it calls the "narrative" approach rather than screening with a list of questions with "yes/no" answers, based on a belief that a formal screening questionnaire does not produce much disclosure. In addition, workers are allowed to label cases as domestic violence if they "suspect" domestic violence, even without the direct disclosure of such a situation by the customer. Anne Arundel County staff told us they think that their screening process works. However, the rate of identified or suspected domestic violence is quite low. Seven or 8 percent of TANF applicants and recipients are categorized as either acknowledged or suspected victims of domestic violence, as are 5 percent of Anne Arundel County's non-TANF customers.

The job counselors are the only TCA staff *required* to discuss domestic violence with customers. However, child support workers and caseworkers also discuss domestic violence, allowing women three opportunities to disclose. Indeed, as the first person a customer sees, the child support worker may need to raise the issue of domestic violence if the customer does not want to reveal the identity or whereabouts of absent parents.

All customers who use the Job Center are screened for domestic violence, not just those applying for TCA. Workers are instructed to start conversations with all customers regarding issues in their lives and then bring up domestic violence as a potential issue that women in particular face. Workers not only listen to the verbal responses of customers, but also watch for nonverbal behaviors that may lead them to suspect an abusive situation. No specific questions are asked and no assessment tool is required. If male and female customers are applying together, then workers try to read the interactions between the partners to gather further information. They will also try to find ways to get the woman alone to ask her about domestic violence. Workers do not notify customers of waiver options or that they can count domestic violence support group attendance as a work activity. We saw YWCA domestic violence services pamphlets prominently displayed in the action rooms of both offices, and on the desks of workers, turned to face the customer.

Customers have many opportunities to disclose domestic violence, because they are asked about domestic violence or domestic violence is discussed with them in each meeting they have with DSS workers. If they come in for follow-up or additional services, the women are asked again. The Job Center does not assign workers to customers, so a woman may see a different worker every time she is in. The deputy director feels that this is a good approach that may maximize the likelihood for domestic violence disclosure, because different workers have different styles when discussing domestic violence. Counselors will also tell one another if they suspect a domestic violence situation. If a woman does not initially disclose her circumstances, but then chooses to do so later, the expectations of the TCA staff may change, along with her work plan. As one worker reported, “bottom line you are looking for barriers to employment, so you need to forget about the person’s history with DSS and start over with a different approach — giving new opportunities that were not available before.”

Coordination of TANF and Child Support Enforcement around Domestic Violence

Every person who comes in to one of Anne Arundel County’s two Job Centers to apply for any type of assistance must meet with a child support worker, who are co-located at the Centers. That worker is expected to broach the subject of domestic violence with customers, as part of an assessment for good cause exemption. If a child support worker uncovers a domestic violence situation, she immediately flags it in the computer. One particularly attentive child support worker noted that good cause can be filed at any time in the process but that before granting it, she generally asks women what their priority is: getting child support, or their own personal safety. In other words, she doesn’t automatically grant good cause before a customer has had the opportunity to weigh her own situation. She also noted that the Child Support Enforcement Office has not given child support workers much guidance on how to handle the granting of good cause for domestic violence. We observed that child support workers’ adherence to these screening and notification regulations is variable.

Once a child support worker identifies domestic violence, that worker is expected to notify the job counselor with whom the customer will be meeting next. From there, the workers jointly undertake the staffing procedure or other relevant service planning. Our impression was that information regarding domestic violence flows fairly freely between the two systems (TANF and CSE) and that workers collaborate to assist customers in domestic violence situations. However, this likely varies depending on the workers involved, as not all job counselors and child support workers probe significantly for domestic violence. In addition, the child support and TCA programs use separate computer systems, and it is not clear how easily information regarding good cause exemptions from child support requirements makes its way to TANF workers (that is, whether and how easily the systems are linked).

Observations

We observed a good deal of variation in how workers dealt with notification and screening about domestic violence situations. Workers varied in the amount of time they discussed domestic violence (conversations lasted only a minute or two in most cases). Some workers would start an open-ended dialogue and would intentionally try to develop a rapport with a woman. One child support worker felt that if you were able to help a woman relax, then you would be more likely to get her to disclose domestic violence. As part of the lead-in or follow-up to this discussion, some workers explained that if the woman was dealing with a domestic violence situation, they could help find services to assist her. Other workers just bluntly asked, “Do you have domestic violence in your household?”, with no lead-in to the discussion and no follow-up about why they asked. Some workers we observed seemed to apologize for having to ask the question (“Because of welfare reform, I have to ask....”). One worker used an assessment tool that she created from the YWCA training materials. It was a list of behaviors that characterized domestic violence. The worker has women read the list, mark each item with a “yes” or “no,” and initial the form. Workers told us that until you have some domestic violence cases, you are not sure what your style will be, and with each case you encounter, you refine your style. Since our site visit, the co-managers of the Job Centers periodically observe each job counselor and provide feedback on how to improve screening techniques. With staff turnover being very high, this monitoring function helps to bring new staff along toward the behavior expected in DSS, and also provides a check on the behavior of existing staff on these sensitive issues.

Reasons for Nondisclosure

The staff at the YWCA told us what they believe are reasons why women may not disclose domestic violence situations to DSS workers:

- Women may not be ready to disclose.
- Women may not realize that they are living in a domestic violence situation.

- Women are afraid that their children will be taken away from them. Some women have had their children taken away from them due to endangerment. Batterers use this as a way to threaten women. In the women's minds, there is no differentiation between TCA and Child Protective Services (CPS, also in DSS). In reality also the line is fuzzy, because TCA workers are required to report situations of suspected child abuse or neglect to CPS.
- Women may not disclose because they are ashamed. There is a lot of societal pressure to maintain the image of a nuclear "healthy" family. DSS needs to help women feel at ease.
- DSS may not clearly and fully explain to customers the domestic violence services and options that are available.
- For some women, counseling may not be a great option. Going to counseling may exacerbate the violence.
- Women may have a more crisis-oriented approach to life. They may understand that they are in a domestic violence situation, but they may not understand the larger picture of the cycle of domestic violence.
- Women do not necessarily want to leave their partners, and may not realize that help is available even if they stay in the relationship.
- Batterers tell women they are crazy, so to seek help confirms they are crazy.

In order to protect confidentiality, workers are encouraged to recuse themselves from cases where there may be a conflict of interest. A battered woman may not want to talk to someone she knows. (Although, on the other hand, she may be more likely to disclose if she knows the worker. As one staff person said, it "goes both ways.")

TCA APPROACH FOLLOWING DISCLOSURE

Once TCA workers identify someone as experiencing domestic violence or suspected of experiencing domestic violence, she is "staffed." This can happen at any point during application for or participation in DSS programs—at intake, at reconsideration, or any other time there is contact between customer and DSS, or at contact initiated by customer.

Staffings happen *immediately*, or as immediately as can be arranged—usually within one half to one hour after a staff person has identified domestic violence as an issue (the same happens if substance abuse is identified as an issue). Staff reported that there have been days during which they had as many as five staffings in one office, and one or two a day per office for either domestic violence or substance abuse is probably average. Any staff person can refer a customer to domestic violence services, including asking for a staffing. A staffing usually brings together the woman herself and various people whom the woman has already met (e.g., child support, job counselor, and/or caseworker), and *at least* the Adult Services Unit social worker in each office who is specially trained to deal with domestic violence issues. Sometimes other people may be included, depending on the issues that need to be resolved. At the time of our visit, the Adult Services social worker had the responsibility to follow up with all domestic violence cases after

the staffing. Since that time, the follow-up responsibility has been given to the Job Center staff who maintain contact with the client in any event. Women are routinely referred to domestic violence services at the Y, but there is no designated staff person at the Y who serves as liaison for TCA customers with domestic violence issues.

The most important issue to be resolved during the staffing is the safety of the woman and any children that may be in the household. Related issues may involve housing, transportation, child care, clothing, employment, money, food, child support, etc. The staffings last as long as necessary to resolve the issues and develop a plan of action. (The staffing we observed lasted almost two hours, starting 15 minutes before the office closed for the day, and lasting until one and a half hours *after* quitting time.) The time is taken to understand the woman's concerns and perceptions about her situation, and to offer her information, clarification of service and support options, and a chance to sort out her priorities, choices, and their consequences. She is told about all of the domestic violence-related services in the county, how they work and how to access them. She is told what the county can offer by way of supportive services. In the staffing we observed, the woman was juggling so many different plates that it took quite a while to sort out all of her concerns and issues, and to be sure that she understood her options for dealing with them. At the end of a staffing, an agreed-upon plan is in place and the woman presumably takes the first step in implementing it. At the time of this writing, Job Center staff have the responsibility for following up to see how things are going. A social worker is called and involved in the staffing if a family is homeless and needs shelter, or if children's safety concerns are raised. Otherwise, social workers are no longer involved in staffings.

The plans developed during staffing are highly individualized. Some women are enrolled in job search without any special conditions, others may arrange to have domestic violence support groups count as their work activity.

DSS has set up a Call Center for regular contact with certain customers. Customers contacted by the Call Center are former TANF recipients and customers with domestic violence problems, substance abuse problems, and child support order issues. Customers are asked about their current work situations and progress toward goals that were set. In addition, callers will inform customers about the current career training programs supported by the Job Center and attempt to recruit customers into these programs.

Maryland also has a diversion program called the welfare avoidance grant (Anne Arundel County calls it a "HELP Grant," for Help Eliminate Lifetime Poverty) that provides eligible families with up-front cash assistance. These grants can also be used to help customers in domestic violence situations with relocation expenses such as security deposits and first month's rent. HELP grants must be recommended by either TCA caseworkers or job counselors on behalf of their customers. However, before issuing HELP grants to customers, workers are supposed to require that customers be in domestic violence counseling programs. This is done because the HELP grant locks the customer out of the TCA caseload for as many months as its monetary value. Therefore there is a risk if the customer is likely to return to the abuser.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

The YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County provides all the domestic violence services in the county. The Y's main office is located in Arnold, just north of Annapolis. It offers counseling for individuals (men, women, and children); families, couples, groups (abused women, batterers, children in battering homes). It also offers emergency shelter at a safe location, where abused women work out individual action plans (including safety but also how they are going to live, support themselves, etc.). The women and their children can participate in individual counseling and support groups, and a parenting program. Legal services are also available through the Y under a federal (STOP) grant. A civil advocate from the Y is stationed at the Glen Burnie District Court (in the same building as the Job Center), and a similar position is available to women coming to the Annapolis Job Center, although not on site. These advocates help women to file *ex parte* orders. They also go with women to court hearings. The Y also provides information and referral for legal services relating to separation and divorce, child support, custody, and visitation. The Y maintains a 24-hour hotline seven days a week, provides crisis intervention, offers information and referral, does hospital outreach, and client advocacy.

The director of the domestic violence program at the Y has been in her position for many years. The DSS deputy director came to her to develop domestic violence training for all DSS workers, including TCA workers. She has since been asked to, and has, extended that training to all DSS workers in Maryland. The premise of the Y is to help women get to where they want to be. They certainly support employment and economic security, but they also support women getting cash assistance for a time when it is needed. They appear to be supportive of what Anne Arundel County has tried to do with TCA, and supportive of the work emphasis. They say most of their clients want to work, so TCA's work emphasis may not be a long-term issue for most clients.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMUNITY AND THE TANF OFFICE

The Y's relationship with Anne Arundel County's TCA office revolves primarily around customer referrals made by TCA staff to the domestic violence program and around Y-led domestic violence training of TCA frontline staff. The leadership of the two agencies told us that their relationship is friendly, and has contributed to cementing the overall relationship of the two agencies. However, as noted above, there is no *formal* arrangement of co-located or dedicated domestic violence program staff working with TCA customers either at TCA offices or at the Y. Nor were we able to get any statistics from DSS on the number of women referred to the Y by the Job Centers, or from the Y on the number of women coming to the Y's program who were referred by the Job Centers. So we cannot assess the degree to which customers act on the referrals they receive.

Historically, the Y has had a lot of contact with the child welfare component of DSS. Contact with DSS has also occurred when women at the shelter need financial assistance. In the past, Y

respondents felt that women were discouraged from seeking financial help from DSS because of the cumbersome paperwork involved as well as the (sometimes warranted) fear that their children might be removed from their homes by Child Protective Services.

Now, however, the Y's sense is that TCA staff are a lot more responsive to domestic violence than they were five years ago. Although they were "at each other's throats" ten years ago, their current relationship is "getting better and better."

The impetus for the more recent collaboration between DSS and the Y stems from a domestic violence training for frontline staff that they jointly produced in February 1997. Training funds from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services became available to design a domestic violence training for frontline workers, and Anne Arundel County's DSS obtained a grant. DSS contacted the director of the Y's domestic violence program in late 1996/early 1997 for assistance with the training. Together DSS and the Y developed the training curriculum.

The TCA staff's domestic violence training has helped facilitate the relationship between the two agencies, in that TCA frontline workers now know the names of Y staff to call with domestic violence questions, concerns, etc. The director of the Y's domestic violence program felt that DSS and the Y have "impressive communication" and "talk to each other straight." Y staff also have regular contact with frontline services staff at DSS and try to assist women in getting what they need. Clients sign Release of Information forms so that DSS and Y staff can talk freely to one another and provide tandem case management. Y staff also have made efforts to obtain some of the TCA intake forms to show and explain to women before sending them over to DSS to apply for assistance.

Y staff said they have no way of knowing whether the women being referred to them by DSS differ at all from their general caseload. They explained that anyone can walk into their support groups and that they do not ask people whether or not they are on TANF. Hence, if as a result of a DSS staffing it is agreed that a woman will attend support groups to fulfill her work plan, DSS apparently does not contact the Y to alert them that the woman is a TANF recipient. (This therefore means that referrals from DSS to the Y are not facilitated with phone calls or monitored for attendance in any direct way.) If Y staff do, however, know that a woman is receiving TANF, they may talk on the phone with TCA workers to get additional case advice as the need arises.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

If supportive staff attitudes are one element of making the TANF and CSE process friendly and supportive to women who are experiencing domestic violence, Anne Arundel County DSS has succeeded in creating an office atmosphere that usually offers that support. This has come about through extensive initial and ongoing training, not only in relation to domestic violence but to change the general mindset of the office from being the "money police" to being "here to help

you.” For the domestic violence aspects of the training, the local domestic violence provider has had a central hand.

The basic reorientation of the Anne Arundel County TCA office toward immediately involving everyone in a self-sufficiency plan, and using TCA and other funds flexibly to offer an extensive array of supportive services makes the process of identifying barriers to work a natural one. Domestic violence fits into this process naturally and reasonably. If the various TCA workers are doing their jobs, they should uncover domestic violence if it is a significant barrier to work.

According to the DSS staff we interviewed, they are much more sensitive to domestic violence issues than ever before. They feel they have changed how they look at women and are more compassionate about and aware of domestic violence issues. They report having learned how to deal with situations when women do not follow through after receiving referrals, etc., and believe that the woman’s safety is always the overarching concern for all the staff. One worker said that they have learned two things: (1) they are there for the customer, and (2) they need to empower the customer. Some customers familiar with the old system are resistant to the staffing approach to domestic violence disclosure. But one worker reported that she thinks the team approach to staffing communicates to customers that the workers are coming together and not working against each other — it is “a whole lot different than it used to be.” Even the Adult Services Division, which always had a relationship with domestic violence services in the area, now has a greater focus on domestic violence than it did in the past.

However, the general procedures for discovering barriers are carried out without the active presence of a representative from the local domestic violence service provider, and we did observe considerable variation in the way that TCA staff raised and pursued the issue of domestic violence with customers. The decision to use Adult Services staff for case management responsibilities in situations involving domestic violence, and make one of them the domestic violence point person for each DSS office, seems to have resulted in a relative lack of contact and interaction between TCA and the domestic violence service people at the Y. Also, one wonders whether the relatively low disclosure rate in Anne Arundel County (7 percent, compared to 20 to 30 percent in some of our other sites) might increase if the county provided more tools to aid staff in identifying domestic violence. The decision not to have an introductory question or two about safety and living arrangements on the one-page intake sheet, or one or more formal screening tools (for domestic violence as well as for other barriers) to use for follow-up, may also contribute to the low level of disclosure. Perhaps these tools might help even if they were only something that staff could fall back on if they had difficulty asking questions directly.

As in all the other places we visited, formal waivers of TANF work requirements for domestic violence reasons are essentially irrelevant in the Anne Arundel County context. One general conclusion from this study is that a waiver, the remedy offered by the Family Violence Amendment to PRWORA, is not a useful approach for most situations in the TANF program in which most women with domestic violence issues find themselves. This is especially true in a context such as Anne Arundel County’s, in which activities to remedy a woman’s problems

related to domestic violence are actively incorporated into her self-sufficiency plan. Anne Arundel County seems to have solved the problem of paying for supportive services when there is no active TANF case (a problem frequently mentioned in Colorado), and to have done so without creating a special domestic violence fund (as Oregon has done). Clearly the basic Anne Arundel County approach to TANF, of establishing a 30-day waiting period during which everything possible is done to get the family sufficient income without resorting to TCA, has required the county to establish procedures for offering supportive services without actually opening a TCA case.

CHAPTER 3 DOUGLAS AND MULTNOMAH COUNTIES, OREGON

Two important features of Oregon's welfare reform policies have made it possible for this state to make substantial progress in addressing domestic violence. First, Oregon employs a model of labor attachment with intense case management that emphasizes investing in clients, helping them to obtain the services and skills necessary to become self-sufficient. An important aspect of the model is helping clients address any barriers to self-sufficiency, of which one may be domestic violence. Second, the state has placed a major emphasis on addressing domestic violence in all Adult and Family Services (AFS) offices. A state-level office oversees statewide training and domestic violence emergency funds, and assists local AFS offices to implement domestic violence activities.

We visited two AFS offices, one rural (Douglas County) and one urban (Southeast Portland), in late September and early October 1999. We spoke with the state AFS Domestic Violence Coordinator and local AFS directors and administrators, child support workers, job counselors, and case managers in both counties, as well as local domestic violence service providers. We conducted focus groups with clients who have disclosed domestic violence and observed the TANF intake and assessment process in the counties. The information summarized in this chapter is based on these interviews and observations, plus documents supplied by AFS.

DOUGLAS COUNTY

Douglas County is located in southern Oregon. In 1996, the median household income in the county was \$29,760 and 16 percent of the residents lived in poverty. In 1999 the average unemployment rate for the county was 9.3 percent, making it higher than the national average and about three times as high as in any other county we visited for this project.

Douglas County is primarily rural, but includes one large town, the town of Roseburg. The county has a population of approximately 102,000 residents, 97.4 percent of whom are white, 0.2 percent are African American, 1.6 percent are American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut, and 0.9 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. The proportion of the population of Hispanic origin is 3.3 percent. AFS staff and caseload closely resemble the district's population.

MULTNOMAH COUNTY

Multnomah County is located in northern Oregon. In 1996, its median household income was \$34,966 and 13.5 percent of the residents lived in poverty. In 1999 the average unemployment

rate for the county was 5.2 percent, which also was above the national average and higher than many of the counties we visited for this project.

Multnomah County includes Oregon's largest metropolitan area, centered on the city of Portland. The county has a population of approximately 633,000 residents, 86.2 percent of whom are white, 6.8 percent are African American, 1.2 percent are American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut, and 5.8 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. The proportion of the population of Hispanic origin is 4.6 percent.

We visited one AFS office in Multnomah County — the Southeast Portland Branch. The caseload is mostly white. The AFS staff are more diverse than the caseload. Diversity is valued in the hiring process and multi-language capability is sought. AFS tries to serve clients in their native languages, for which they rely on staff rather than translators. Of the 40 staff in the Southeast Portland branch, three are Vietnamese, three are Russian, and three workers speak Spanish.

STATE TANF PROGRAM

Oregon, a state-administered state, has been working on one or another approach to welfare reform since 1988. The caseload has decreased substantially. From January 1996 to December 1998 the number of recipients and families decreased by 53 percent. Food stamp enrollment is also lower by 17 to 18 percent from FY 1996 to FY 1998. Medicaid enrollment increased during the same time period by 17 percent due to substantial outreach efforts.

As a cornerstone of its TANF approach, Oregon uses a model of labor attachment with intense case management. The goal of this approach is to ensure that clients get what they need from the AFS system to obtain the services and skills necessary to become self-sufficient. An important aspect of the model is helping clients address any barriers to self-sufficiency, including domestic violence.

State Administered

Oregon is officially a state-administered state. However, it is organized into 15 Districts with 61 branch offices (more than the number of counties). The districts and branches have considerable local autonomy and are encouraged to do what is necessary to make the program work locally while continuing to comply with basic state rules.

Program Requirements

Oregon does not have a lifetime limit on benefits. Within this overall framework, however, there are both firmer interim limits and greater flexibility. No one can receive TANF cash assistance

for more than 24 cumulative months out of 84 consecutive months (2 years out of 7). However, local AFS office staff indicate that no one will ever be forced from TANF rolls due to time limits. This is because the clock only ticks if a client is non-compliant. If clients cooperate with the requirements for job search and work participation, they are not considered to be “on the clock.” Extensions of time limits are granted if clients are “making a good-faith effort to find employment” (Gallagher, Gallagher, Perese, Schreiber, & Watson, 1998). Exemptions from the time limit (for up to 20 percent of the caseload) are allowed for persons with disabilities or illness and persons caring for those with disabilities.

The asset limit for TANF eligibility is \$2,500, but this increases to \$10,000 for families with one JOBS participant who complies with his/her self-sufficiency plan (Gallagher, Gallagher, Perese, Schreiber, & Watson, 1998). Applicants may also have vehicles up to \$10,000 in worth.

The goal of the Oregon system is to assist clients to find jobs and support career development to achieve family self-sufficiency. If appropriate, work activities begin upon application for assistance and continue throughout the process. Those found to have good cause to receive an exemption from work activities, such as domestic violence or substance abuse issues, must participate in a self-sufficiency plan focusing on steps that will resolve these barriers to work and self-sufficiency. Although people will receive food stamps and Medicaid (Oregon Health Plan) immediately, and will receive help with child support, child care, transportation, basic living expenses, and other support services, they do not receive any cash assistance for 45 days. During the 45-day period, clients are in the Assessment Program, which provides for families’ basic needs, for example, rent, utilities, and personal and household incidentals. Up to 200 percent of the TANF grant amount can be used to meet families’ needs during the Assessment Program. The hope and expectation is that within that 45-day period, they will find a job and not need cash assistance. For many, this hope is borne out.

Work Activity

“Work” counts as “work,” but participation in services to address barriers to work, work experience, job search, attending life skills sessions, and GED preparation count as “participating,” and, if the clients have a self-sufficiency plan, as “cooperating.” The goal is to have clients participate in 30 hours a week of activities if appropriate, including job contacts, classes, and other activities. If a client has barriers to employment, participation in services to address these barriers (for example, substance abuse treatment) can count toward the 30-hour requirement.

Sanction Policies

The Oregon sanction policy is graduated, with more severe consequences at each level of continued or additional instances of noncompliance. The first two months sanction for noncompliance is a \$50.00 reduction in benefits. The adult is removed from the benefit for

continued noncompliance or a second instance of noncompliance for the third and fourth months. Benefits are terminated for continued noncompliance after four months or additional instances of noncompliance (Gallagher, Gallagher, Perese, Schreiber, & Watson, 1998). However, people interviewed during our visit reported that termination is a six-step process giving clients every possible opportunity to show a good-faith effort to comply. The result is that very few reach this final level of sanction.

Most clients entering the rolls since TANF are cooperative. The problems arise with those who were long-term recipients before TANF. Most sanctions are in this group. Douglas County has also had a few disqualifications (people who have gone through the entire six-month, six-step process and been terminated).

State-Level Domestic Violence Activities

Oregon did not initially adopt the Family Violence Option (FVO), because the flexibility under this option was not clear. However, since learning more about the FVO recently, the state has officially adopted it. Even without it, however, AFS developed an approach to helping women with domestic violence issues through Oregon statute 411.11.7, passed in 1996. The legislation was created to develop a broader definition of domestic violence coupled with an individualized case management approach. This legislation has four specific components (Adult and Family Services Division, 1999):

- Screening for domestic violence;
- Community staffing and individualized family plans for clients with domestic violence;
- Waivers of requirements that would put victim or children at further risk of violence; and
- Reporting of domestic violence identification process, emergency assistance utilization, and domestic violence training, information sharing, and evaluation for AFS staff.

The legislation also helped create values by which every worker should deal with domestic violence:

- Believe women without verification; and
- Put safety first.

Through the implementation of statute 411.11.7, Oregon has accomplished much change in its orientation toward domestic violence as a barrier to employment. Elements of the approach include state activities, questions and procedures to prompt disclosure, personnel/staff assignment changes to support women who are in unsafe situations, and resources to assist women who are in unsafe situations.

Oregon's AFS has developed a statewide action plan and has required each AFS district office to develop a local community plan to address domestic violence and to identify a domestic violence point person in the district office. The state office holds local offices accountable for having a

domestic violence approach in place, but does not require local branches to implement specific models to address domestic violence. The state also offers training (some supported by federal demonstration grants), produces a quarterly domestic violence newsletter that is distributed to all AFS offices, and distributes posters and other ideas for display in branch offices (to convey AFS's seriousness about combating domestic violence and that it is "safe" to talk to people in the office about it).

Additionally, Oregon has created a program called Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS), which is essentially an emergency assistance program, but only for domestic violence issues. Eligibility is different from TANF eligibility, in that undocumented women and women whose husband/partner's assets would make them ineligible for TANF can still get help. Workers are instructed to ignore all income and assets that the woman does not control directly, thus ignoring houses, cars, and other assets of which she is co-owner, as well as her partner's income.

Through TA-DVS, domestic violence point people and other case managers are authorized to spend up to \$1,200 every 90 days to assure the safety and stability of women and their children fleeing domestic violence. The money may be used to help someone relocate (including to another state), secure and move into housing, get or fix a car, get furniture, or whatever else is necessary to resolve the emergency.

For domestic violence cases, the 45-day wait for cash assistance is usually waived, and the client is enrolled in TANF as well as in food stamps, Medicaid, and, if needed, child care and other support services. We heard that it usually takes women a month or two to get stabilized, at which point they usually focus on getting a job or enter AFS's Job Search classes. AFS serves many more women than those who would go to shelter or use local domestic violence services on their own. TA-DVS helps many women establish stable housing before they ever have to go to shelter.

Oregon does not have a formal waiver process. But the state waives a number of AFS/TANF requirements to serve women dealing with domestic violence issues, including citizenship and work activity requirements. The only requirements it does not waive are the caregiver status requirement and the income requirement. However, as with the TA-DVS process, if the domestic violence involves the batterer controlling the financial resources, then AFS can be flexible about how it defines the woman's income and assets.

The state-level domestic violence activities for AFS are supported by research indicating that domestic violence is a significant problem in Oregon. The Oregon Health Division and Multnomah County Health Department conducted a statewide needs assessment about domestic violence. Findings were that 1 of every 8 women (13.3 percent) in Oregon were victims of intimate partner violence in the 12 months preceding the study: 1 in 10 experienced physical assault, 1 in 14 experienced sexual coercion and 1 in 20 suffered injuries (Glick, Johnson, and Pham, 1999).

THE APPLICATION AND CASE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Clients work with intake workers, case managers, and job counselors. Intake workers see clients for a relatively short time, but are the people who channel clients to services to address barriers to work, to job search, or elsewhere in the agency. At the second step, case managers explain all of the work-related requirements, review documents for eligibility for various programs, make referrals to child support, conduct an assessment, and develop case plans that become the guidelines for what clients have to do (self-sufficiency plans). At the same time, job counselors (from the JOBS program) work with clients to identify what types of jobs they might want and be suited for, and what types of remedial or skill development activities they might need. Case managers and job counselors may have fairly extensive contact with clients if the clients get past the 45-day Assessment Program and still do not have a job. Also, if there are barriers to immediate placement in job search, the case manager will stay involved until these issues are resolved, and the job counselor will begin working with the client once work becomes a realistic possibility. Clients must report the progress of their individualized plans to AFS on a monthly basis.

To begin the process, the client completes a one-page intake form that is reviewed with an intake worker. The intake worker identifies programs for which the client is eligible, explains work requirements and the 45-day Assessment Program, and signs clients up for Job Search classes. Many applicants are assigned to Job Search classes, which last three weeks and at which attendance is mandatory. Intake workers also schedule appointments for clients with case managers and give clients a list of information and documentation the clients will need to bring to their appointments with the case managers in order to complete the eligibility process for food stamps, Medicaid, and any other services. Case manager appointments usually occur the day after intake. Job Search classes start the day after the intake worker sees the client, whether or not the client has seen a case manager.

Case managers conduct assessments with clients that take about 1 to 1.5 hours. The assessment process is the point at which clients are determined able and ready to participate in labor market-related activities. The goal is to help people find work instead of opening cash grants. The workers are to identify any barriers to work and develop a plan that is specifically geared toward the individual. The plan may or may not include waivers, in the sense that typical aspects of the self-sufficiency plan may be postponed until the client is ready. Formal waivers under an FVO do not exist.

Case managers have a great deal of discretion when working with families. In Oregon, case managers have always had discretion to develop individually focused plans for families, but they used this discretion less often than they do now. During the assessment process, the case manager reviews eligibility requirements and examines resource needs, including child support, child care, food stamps, and TANF. If clients have a child support order in place, the case manager attempts to get them into a part-time job to supply enough income to avoid the need for cash assistance. The push toward work would be especially strong if clients have past work experience and the skills to get a job, especially in these strong economic times. If clients have

just gotten a job but will not get paid for a while, AFS can pay some bills as part of diversion. AFS actions of this type also allow clients to be eligible for one year of Medicaid, child care, and possibly food stamps. Child support enforcement is always part of the plan when any income maintenance program is at issue.

Clients work with a job counselor, who is employed by an agency under contract to the JOBS program, at the same time they are working with their case manager. Once people begin working, their cases are transferred to job retention workers. Job retention workers contact clients, help them with various issues such as budgeting, car payments, housing payments, community resources, day care and back-up, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and child support. The job retention program is designed to help clients keep their jobs despite crises. The attitude the staff try to convey is, “Don’t panic, don’t quit.”

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTIVITIES

District branches can implement a number of models to address domestic violence in their caseloads. However, some elements of the process are similar across sites. Several questions on various intake and assessment forms are set up to prompt disclosure. The first one-page intake form has four such questions:

- Is your housing unsafe?
- Do you need to get away from an abusive situation?
- Do you need a place to live?
- Does your partner or spouse make you afraid by threatening, yelling, or physically hurting you or your children?

The job counseling assessment includes a more extensive “Safety Assessment,” which covers the specifics about types of abuse and asks whether the partner keeps the woman from going to work or school, whether the children are safe, and whether the woman has a restraining order.

All staff, from receptionists through intake workers to case managers, are supposed to be trained to notice answers to these questions that suggest abuse. If the questions are answered “yes,” any or all of these workers should respond in ways that acknowledge the domestic violence and begin the process of helping the woman to cope with it. If the questions are left blank, staff would be alerted to conduct a more complete assessment.

In addition, every district office has a domestic violence point person whose responsibility it is to aid workers whose cases involve domestic violence and oversee the quality of response of the various branch offices within their district. Many branch offices also have appointed a domestic violence point person, who may be an AFS staff person, someone from a local domestic violence program who is stationed in the AFS office full- or part-time, or both. Eleven of 15 districts have on-site domestic violence workers from local domestic violence service providers. In either case,

the state encourages local AFS offices to develop strong partnerships with domestic violence service providers.

If the branch point person is an AFS case manager, she may not carry a regular caseload, or may carry a reduced caseload, and is on call at all times to help with new and old cases. As soon as domestic violence is identified in a new case, the point person takes over the case and becomes the case manager until the domestic violence issues are resolved. With ongoing cases where domestic violence surfaces, the regular case manager usually calls the point person into the case for consultation, and also includes the client in the discussion. But usually the client wants to stay with the regular case manager, so the point person does not take over the case.

If the branch point person is an on-site advocate from a domestic violence service provider, she will usually spend significant time in the AFS office, acting essentially in a similar role to the point people who *are* AFS staff. She can also be paged if a client comes in and needs assistance when she is not there.

In general, those branches with on-site domestic violence advocates from a local domestic violence service provider work better with those local providers than the branches without advocates from such agencies. This is due in part to the constant cross-training that occurs by having the domestic violence advocate functioning in both the AFS office and the local domestic violence agency, interacting regularly with staff in both venues and being available to resolve issues wherever they arise.

In many branches (including the two we visited), local advocates present sessions to clients during the Job Search classes, spending a whole afternoon on domestic violence issues. These sessions are “Domestic Violence 101” for clients, with a slant toward encouraging disclosure and identifying resources that are available to help. Considerable disclosure occurs at or after these sessions, if it has not happened already.

Douglas County

In Douglas County distances are great and the only public transportation is limited bus service in the town of Roseburg. Therefore, it makes a difference where you live in the county when it comes to domestic violence services. If someone lives in Roseburg, she can get anything she needs, including services from AFS and Battered Persons Advocacy (BPA). Roseburg has a shelter that serves the whole county. If she lives in North County or on the Pacific coast (72 miles west, but still in the county), a few services such as support groups are available. If she lives in South County, the branch AFS office there now has a domestic violence advocate on site one day a week and support groups are available, but no shelter. Anyone can call BPA’s 24-hour crisis line for information or crisis counseling.

The Douglas County/Roseburg AFS district office has contracted with BPA to provide a part-time on-site advocate. BPA is the domestic violence service provider for the Douglas County/

Roseburg AFS district. It provides many domestic violence services, including safety planning, shelter, life skills, legal assistance, help locating housing, help with children's reactions to domestic violence, and direct services for children both in and outside the shelter. The local domestic violence community has been very supportive of AFS efforts, and views employment and economic security as important areas of focus for their clients. Many of their clients do not want welfare and find it hard to approach the AFS office. The new AFS attitude of "independence as fast as possible" fits well with the attitudes of these clients.

For the past two years in Roseburg, a BPA employee has been stationed at the AFS office part time and is on call at all times to come back to the office if necessary. The advocate has clients through BPA and if they are also AFS clients, she co-handles case management with an AFS worker. If the clients are from AFS and domestic violence issues surface, the advocate works with the AFS case managers around meeting women's needs. If a new client discloses domestic violence to an AFS worker and she is interested in speaking with the advocate, the worker will try to find the advocate immediately. The advocate will talk with the woman and tell her about services and options before other AFS processes continue.

About every six weeks, the JOBS program has BPA conduct a 3-hour presentation about domestic violence in one of its classes. BPA also conducts shorter sessions in other classes such as GED. By introducing the BPA person into classes, AFS is able to identify additional women who need help. It can be easier for women to come for help if they know the person to whom they will be talking because they have seen her in a class. The domestic violence sessions have been conducted since 1990, but the BPA subcontract is only two years old. Even before this contract with BPA, JOBS people would make referrals to BPA for women who were having problems. However, the information was kept from AFS staff until two years ago, when AFS staff were trained on domestic violence issues.

Additionally, if domestic violence surfaces as an issue, one particular child support enforcement worker is assigned to the case. This worker identifies safe ways to obtain support for the child. Most of the contact with the client is over the phone. This worker has developed ways to protect the information that is collected, to assure the woman's safety. AFS can keep information from the batterer about the client's current work or living situation. It can also help the client with establishing custody, including referrals, information, and how to get legal representation.

Multnomah County

If a woman marks "yes" to the questions pertaining to abuse on the screening form or leaves that question blank, the receptionist will contact the domestic violence point person. The domestic violence point person will bring the woman into an interview room in the reception area and conduct an assessment of the domestic violence situation. The purpose of this assessment is to determine if the woman has safety needs that must be addressed immediately. If there are immediate safety concerns, the point person conducts an intake interview. If no immediate safety concerns exist, then the point person schedules the woman for her next available intake session,

usually the next day. When clients disclose to their case managers instead of on the screening form, they are still referred to the domestic violence point person. However, the original case manager does not lose the case, but handles it in consultation with the point person.

The domestic violence case manager conducts the initial domestic violence assessment and develops an individualized plan for the woman. The case manager refers the woman to appropriate services to meet her needs and works on immediate housing issues with the woman (for example, shelter, motel). The Southeast Portland AFS branch (one of 13 branches in AFS District 2, including 10 branches in Multnomah County and 3 in Washington County) does not have on-site domestic violence advocates from domestic violence service providers, but has ongoing contact with a number of domestic violence service providers in the area. There are about a dozen agencies in the district whose primary focus is working with domestic violence survivors, but many other community-based organizations are involved with domestic violence work as well. AFS must interface with all of them.

All of the domestic violence service providers in the county deal with all 10 AFS branches, so the District does not try to assign particular branches to particular service providers. AFS domestic violence case managers have started to meet with the domestic violence service providers on a bimonthly basis. They are trying to build an ongoing collaborative process because the contact between communities has thus far been based on complaints rather than proactive projects. The District 2 Senior Operations Manager is the domestic violence coordinator for District 2 and has a strong connection to the Domestic Violence Services Coordinator in Multnomah County. The top level is strong, and domestic violence service providers are hoping that the effort trickles down to all AFS staff.

One major issue in District 2 is connecting women to appropriate AFS branches. It may not be safe for women to access the AFS office that is closest to their home, which is how clients usually are assigned to branches. On a related note, women who are in shelter are considered homeless, and therefore can access any branch they choose. However, once they leave shelter their case must be transferred to the branch closest to their home. To address this, District 2 has just instituted a “no wrong door” policy and a client may access services at any branch.

ISSUES IN IDENTIFYING AND HANDLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

Staff Attitudes, Training, and Changes

For the most part, AFS staff have undergone a shift in thinking from eligibility work to assisting clients in getting what they need from the system. The atmosphere in the offices we visited is one of helpfulness, and staff create an environment in which women may feel comfortable disclosing domestic violence as a barrier to work. The offices have flyers, posters, and brochures addressing domestic violence issues in the reception area, in staff cubicles, and in public restrooms.

A small number of staff in the offices we visited were not comfortable dealing with domestic violence issues or had negative attitudes about dealing with the issue. Administrators and other staff were aware of this and these particular staff were not given clients with domestic violence issues. If domestic violence surfaced as part of the case management process, these case managers were allowed to shift the client to the domestic violence case manager.

The state AFS office provides domestic violence training to all new staff as part of an initial AFS training called *Mission, Values, and Principles*. All new TANF employees are provided additional domestic violence training as part of their TANF training module. The state AFS office also offers optional training on domestic violence and oppression issues twice a year in its prevention and intervention workshops. It provided teleconference training sessions five times over the past three years on a system called “Ed-Net.”

All TANF staff are supposed to have attended training related to domestic violence provided by the state. This training includes information about the dynamics of domestic violence and attitudes, plus more focused training for dealing with women’s specific situations. In addition, the state provides training on how to collaborate with the local domestic violence service providers. All training is conducted collaboratively with domestic violence advocates and state-level AFS staff. It is a challenge to keep all the AFS staff trained, due to staff turnover. However, staff turnover does not seem to be an issue in every branch office (for example, Roseburg does not have a turnover problem).

Douglas County. Just walking into the Roseburg office alerts a woman that this is a supportive place to talk about domestic violence. Posters countering myths about domestic violence and urging women to get help are all over the walls. Flyers, brochures, and cards identifying services and how to access them are on tables in many locations.

The TANF administrator in the Roseburg office is very committed to addressing domestic violence and the majority of staff in the office are open to domestic violence issues. Several have become volunteers at the local domestic violence service provider, and have gone through the lengthy volunteer training. The few staff who are still uncomfortable with the issues do not have to deal with clients with domestic violence situations. AFS and BPA staff now conduct cross-training about once a year. The training includes role-playing of all the relationships among staff and clients.

Multnomah County. Program administrators indicated that there is still skepticism among some staff around domestic violence issues. The staff who are skeptical are not chosen to be the domestic violence case managers or point people. For these roles, administrators try to identify and choose someone who genuinely cares about the issue. One problem they have encountered with choosing a domestic violence case manager is the workers who seem to want domestic violence cases tend to be the newer workers. They are faced with a trade-off — the lead domestic violence case manager is someone who cares about domestic violence issues, but is not as well-versed in AFS programs as other staff may be.

The case management training required for all AFS staff involves training on “being aware of all the areas of people’s lives” and how to be open and sensitive to individual needs. This includes being sensitive to domestic violence issues. Beyond the state training, the Southeast Portland office does not require further domestic violence training. However, the domestic violence case manager has provided additional training to all staff — from case managers to reception. The training for the case managers lasted two hours. Reception staff were trained to review client screening forms for domestic violence, so they can refer clients directly to the domestic violence case manager. The attitude of the staff varies somewhat regarding domestic violence. However, the better trained individuals are more likely to be positive about case practices in domestic violence situations. Training within the agency through the domestic violence community is also available on an ongoing basis for anyone, not just the domestic violence point person.

AFS workers told us they have begun to respect the work of the domestic violence community through informal contacts over time. Now, even if some workers do not understand domestic violence they trust that the domestic violence advocate does understand. They will use the recommendation made by the advocate when developing client service plans. In the past, women were deferred from work activities for only up to two months. Now women with domestic violence issues can be deferred for up to four or five months, if that is necessary to stabilize their situation.

The Relationship Between AFS and the Domestic Violence Community

Urban AFS branches have had more difficulty setting up domestic violence programs than the rural branches. The difficulty may lie in the fact that rural branches have one domestic violence service provider with whom to work while urban branches may have to work with many domestic violence service providers (as do many of the Portland branches). The rural branches are therefore afforded more one-on-one interaction with the domestic violence service providers than the urban offices.

When AFS first started addressing domestic violence in the district offices, it heard a number of negatively biased attitudes toward domestic violence service providers. AFS has had to work hard as an agency to address this bias. It has decreased over time, but still persists for some staff. Additionally, AFS has worked to help staff recognize that AFS’s power over women can mirror the power of women’s batterers, and that case managers have to learn to be supportive without assuming control.

AFS also met with resistance from domestic violence service providers when it first started addressing domestic violence in the district offices. The domestic violence service providers were wary that AFS’s commitment to the issue was not real and long lasting, but was merely political. The resistance was based on past experience with AFS and information from survivors about how they were treated by AFS staff. Also, domestic violence service providers and AFS staff have differing philosophies. Domestic violence service providers feel that AFS does not have enough “bottom lines” and does not deal sufficiently with issues of oppression (although

AFS does train staff on issues of oppression). In addition, some resistance to AFS exists at the individual level, meaning particular local domestic violence service providers do not get along well with the AFS managers in their area.

Douglas County. The current AFS Administrator in Roseburg is highly committed to addressing domestic violence in the AFS caseload. She was on BPA's board of directors for many years. When she became district manager she talked with BPA about working with AFS, which had not been happening. The groups agreed to work on helping AFS staff gain more understanding of the needs of domestic violence victims and gain more mutual trust. BPA began to train AFS staff and to present information to clients in what was then a group orientation session. The administrative support for addressing domestic violence drew out latent interest in some existing staff, who felt empowered to speak up and act on their interest. Some staff began offering to take the domestic violence cases into their own caseload. Some went through BPA volunteer training (60 or more hours). Now the people who care the most about domestic violence tend to be the ones who do the work within the AFS office. The biggest obstacle has been the attitudes of long-term staff who did/do not want to change, although this is a small minority of workers.

The AFS staff have undergone a major shift in thinking as did the BPA staff. The groups now share a common goal and appreciate how each contributes to reaching that goal. Now both groups collaborate well to serve women victims of violence.

Multnomah County. AFS staff in the Southeast Portland Branch have also undergone a major shift in thinking. Over the last few years the relationship between AFS and the domestic violence community has improved and women victims of violence are getting the services they need. Among all thirteen AFS branch offices in District 2, however, the smaller offices are better at assisting victims than the bigger offices (Southeast Portland is considered one of the bigger offices). At the smaller offices people are able to communicate differently with one another.

Level of Disclosure, Interest in Services, and Waivers

Oregon does not require that staff record the number of domestic violence disclosures received, so it is unclear how much disclosure happens in these offices. However, it appears that women feel comfortable with disclosing and many do. Of the reasons for not disclosing offered by the AFS clients we interviewed who had disclosed, few were about inappropriate behavior of AFS staff or services. The reasons include:

- She does not see herself as “that kind of person”;
- She does not perceive his behavior as abuse;
- She would have felt crazy, not wanting to be seen as crazy;
- She feels stupid about being in the relationship;
- She does not know what to expect from AFS if she discloses;

- Fear her batterer will find out;
- Fear no one will believe her or help her;
- Isolation from the community;
- She may hope the batterer will change;
- Fear of losing children to the batterer; and
- Fear that services will be worse than dealing with the abuse.

We also asked women who disclosed, “What would help women disclose?” Responses included:

- Workers with good people skills;
- Workers who do not express to women that they are expecting them to abuse the system;
- The opportunity to tell our story;
- Workers who do not treat women in abusive situations like they are “stupid”; and
- Workers who are caring.

In Oregon, waivers are not relevant and are not formally defined. Women who disclose domestic violence are able to get many of their needs met. They are able to have the immediate Job Search classes requirement deferred, and steps they take to become safe become their self-sufficiency plan. Women can also get a “waiver” of the 45-day Assessment Program and have a cash grant opened — thus they can get **more** than regular new TANF applicants. Additionally, they may receive as much TA-DVS assistance as they need, up to the \$1,200 limit every 90 days.

Douglas County. The BPA advocate in the Roseburg office thinks BPA serves two to three times as many women because a BPA advocate is in the AFS office. It is not clear, however, how many women disclose and how many receive follow-up services.

Multnomah County. The Southeast Portland office also does not count the number of women who disclose. However, of those who disclose, many women feel safe and ready to focus on work. These women are referred to work activity (approximately 40 percent of the women who disclose). Another 60 percent of women who disclose domestic violence are not referred to work activity for 30 to 45 days. Approximately 50 percent of the women who disclose domestic violence also have alcohol and drug issues.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Oregon has made great progress in addressing domestic violence in the AFS caseload. Women victims of violence in Oregon are able to get the services and help they need from the AFS system. The model of labor attachment with intense case management to promote self-sufficiency has made Oregon’s AFS system a “kinder, gentler” system when it comes to TANF administration in general. Case managers have had to shift their thinking about serving clients and now focus on getting families what they need to eventually become self-supporting. It is part

of their role to address barriers to work and provide services to help remove these barriers with a particular emphasis on addressing domestic violence.

Expectations around staff behavior about domestic violence have been communicated to AFS staff. There is a great deal of state-level support, as well as requirements, for dealing with domestic violence in the AFS caseload. Domestic violence has been addressed through statewide training efforts required for all AFS workers, as well as being part of the training for new TANF employees. The state AFS office has further emphasized domestic violence by offering other domestic violence training options throughout the year.

The TANF rules for domestic violence victims are very supportive. By using TANF funds, AFS offices are able to offer cash assistance to domestic violence victims sooner than to other clients. The Assessment Program is suspended and cash grants are opened immediately for victims if needed. AFS offers additional emergency funds through TA-DVS — a cash grant available every 90 days to increase and ensure victims' safety. Victims are also offered a wide array of supportive services to assist them in resolving the domestic violence situations in their lives.

As in some other sites we visited, Oregon does not address the issue of waivers for domestic violence victims because such clients are “cooperating” with TANF requirements by addressing their barriers to work. Waivers are not discussed with clients because the threat of losing their assistance is not real.

CHAPTER 4 SHAWNEE COUNTY, KANSAS

The Topeka Area Office of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) is currently implementing a domestic violence pilot project called the OARS program (Orientation-Assessment-Referral-Safety). The office has not undergone a major change in how it administers TANF as a result of the pilot. Instead, the office has integrated the activities of the OARS program into its existing structure.

OARS has met with some success, but administrators have also encountered barriers as they implement it. SRS administrators at both the state and local office level strongly support the project and its efforts. There is less support for the pilot, however, among some frontline workers. The workers have not been asked to shift their focus from one of eligibility/work support to one of helping clients reduce barriers to self-sufficiency, of which domestic violence is one.

We visited the Topeka Area Office in Shawnee County in October 1999. The information included in this chapter is based on interviews with representatives from the Kansas Central SRS Office, the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, the Battered Women Task Force in Topeka, and the OARS Program. We also interviewed SRS administrators and integrated case workers from the Topeka Area Office. We conducted observations of the orientation program and intake/case management process and conducted a focus group with clients who disclosed domestic violence and were involved in the OARS program. The information is also based on the materials provided by the Topeka Area Office.

SHAWNEE COUNTY

Shawnee County is located in eastern Kansas and is home to the state's third largest city and state capital, the city of Topeka. The county has a population of approximately 171,000 residents, 88.9 percent of whom are white, 9.0 percent are African American, 1.2 percent are American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut, and 1.0 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. The proportion of the population of Hispanic origin is 6.4 percent. In 1996, the median income for the residents of the county was \$37, 933 and 10 percent of the residents lived in poverty. In 1999 the average unemployment rate for the county was 3.1 percent.

STATE TANF PROGRAM

State Administered

The TANF program is state administered through 11 area SRS offices. The Topeka Area Office is one of these, though most offices serve multiple counties. Each area office must meet outcomes-based performance measures determined by the state. To do so, counties have some discretion in service contracting. Each area office receives an allocation of money that it can use for training, hard goods, and services. In the Topeka Area Office the funds go to employment agencies.

Program Requirements

Kansas's TANF program has a 60-month lifetime limit on cash assistance. Kansas does not have a time trigger for participation in work. Instead it has a job search waiver, meaning as long as clients are participating in job readiness components, they are in compliance. Activity requirements follow the federal minimum work requirement of 30 hours per week. The program engages people in work activities at the point of application for cash assistance. Allowable exemptions from work activities include caring for a child under 12 months of age and caring for a disabled person. The 60-month clock does not, however, stop ticking for any reason.

The TANF asset limit is \$2,000 and ownership of one vehicle. Kansas does not have any diversion assistance policies (Gallagher, Gallagher, Perese, Schreiber, & Watson, 1998). SRS has an employment support fund that is available to TANF clients (up to \$5,000). Caseworkers can make these funds available to TANF clients for clothes, transportation, and other employment costs.

Sanction Policies

The sanction policy in Kansas was initially termination of the full-family benefit. This initial policy was perceived as sometimes overly punitive, and was changed. The current sanction policy only affects the adult's portion of the grant and does not affect adult or child Medicaid. The benefits return immediately upon compliance after the first sanction. There is a two-month penalty before benefits resume following compliance after the second sanction. About 10 to 12 percent of the client population in the Topeka Area Office receive sanctions, though there is wide variation across workers in their tendency to sanction.

State-Level Involvement in Domestic Violence Activities

Once Kansas was able to implement the mandatory elements of PRWORA, it began to consider other services it could implement. Central SRS office staff were approached by the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (KCASDV) to adopt the Family Violence Option, and became interested in implementing domestic violence services in local offices through this contact. A pilot program was developed over the course of two years with the assistance of the Coalition, and was implemented in the Topeka Area Office beginning in February 1999. In October 1999, Kansas officially adopted the Family Violence Option and is now planning statewide implementation of domestic violence services in local SRS offices.

The biggest barrier that the Central SRS office faced when implementing the pilot program was gaining support from child support enforcement. A new criterion was set for establishing good cause exemptions for domestic violence at the same time the pilot was implemented. The criterion was that only the woman's disclosure and written affidavit was required for exemption, with no further corroboration or verification. Child support enforcement was reluctant to implement such a policy for fear the exemption would be too easy to obtain. Despite the reluctance, the policy was approved and enacted in February 1999.

THE APPLICATION AND CASE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

All SRS applicants are required to attend a 30- to 45-minute orientation covering a number of important topics related to SRS services. The orientation includes information about the different types of available assistance, the eligibility and work requirements, and the OARS program. Orientation takes place twice a day at 9:00 am and 1:00 pm. Once the session is over, clients are referred to a worker for eligibility determination and ongoing case management. Topeka has an integrated worker system whereby a single worker performs eligibility and JOBS case management functions for JOBS-mandatory TANF clients.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTIVITIES

The OARS program consists of training all SRS staff on domestic violence issues, having an advocate from the local domestic violence service provider on site to implement services, and allowing participation in the on-site program to count as meeting the work activity requirement for clients dealing with domestic violence issues. The OARS program is considered to be a job readiness component, and clients attending it are considered to be in compliance.

The OARS program is a collaboration between SRS and the Battered Women's Task Force (BWTF). The program mission is to help remove issues related to sexual assault and domestic violence as barriers to work in order to help people become self-sufficient. SRS contracts with

BWTF to have a full-time on-site advocate to implement the OARS program in the Topeka Area Office.

BWTF is the primary domestic violence service provider in the community and provides services in the YWCA building (a disclosed location) and at a shelter (an undisclosed location). BWTF finds economic security to be a major issue in the lives of the women it serves and, as a result, has made primary the role of the on-site advocate in the SRS office. The on-site advocate provides services at SRS, and also acts as a liaison for women involved in BWTF services in need of SRS assistance.

The on-site advocate provides all SRS applicants with information about the OARS program. During orientation, the advocate has approximately five minutes to discuss the services that are available through the OARS program if individuals are dealing with domestic violence. The advocate explains that she is there to help, that domestic violence is common, and encourages people to disclose this problem to their case manager or to her if they are interested in getting some help. Each client is also given a flyer about the OARS program.

Although the orientation includes all SRS applicants, only TANF clients receive formal follow-up about domestic violence issues through screening and assessment with case managers. Non-TANF clients do not have follow-up assessments. This situation caused discomfort among the staff, so the on-site advocate is available to all clients for assessment, services, and referral. However, SRS is only required to provide the OARS program to cash assistance applicants.

Case managers ask about domestic violence during their meetings with clients. Staff are not required to screen clients for domestic violence, but use their discretion as to when to ask questions. The screening tool is to be used as a guide, not as a required part of the assessment process. Some staff use the screening tool to assess clients, others just ask about domestic violence issues in the family, and others may not mention domestic violence at all. Some case managers will only screen for domestic violence if they see a pattern of behavior that they perceive to be related (that is, a pattern of failure), physical signs of abuse, or a relevant police report in the newspaper.

KCASDV helped Central SRS develop the screening tools used by the SRS staff. The pilot program developers did not require the screening for all TANF clients, because they thought it might be inappropriate. Instead, they taught workers to look for signs of domestic violence. They thought that if SRS workers put aside the screening form and talked one-on-one with women, they might get further. Experience in some of the other sites we visited would suggest the opposite.

Because workers are not required to screen clients for domestic violence and do not seem to do so consistently, it is unlikely that clients will routinely be referred to the OARS program for past abuse unless its effects manifest in a way noticeable or obvious to caseworkers. More often,

clients are referred to the OARS program for current domestic violence (either disclosed or suspected).

The screening tool for staff is to be delivered orally to clients, and includes the following questions:

“Because domestic violence and sexual assault are significant problems in the lives of women, I ask these questions in order to better understand your situation.

- 1) Have you ever been hurt, threatened or intimidated by a partner or former partner?
- 2) Are you afraid of a current or former partner or other family member?
- 3) Have you ever been subjected to unwanted or inappropriate sexual advances or actions by a current or former partner, or anyone else?
- 4) Do you believe that pursuing child support would put you or your children in danger?
- 5) Do you believe current or past abuse might prevent you from participating in work activities?”

While conducting an assessment or using the screening tool, staff are also supposed to communicate to women the following: (1) “you don’t deserve to be hurt,” (2) “you have a right to be safe,” (3) “we believe you,” and (4) “the OARS advocate is a safe person to talk to.” The five questions on the screening tool for SRS staff are also on posters around the office for clients to see and test themselves.

A second tool was developed for staff to help identify signs that a woman may be abused. This tool includes the following signs of abuse to consider about clients:

- “1) Comes to appointments repeatedly with injuries that are inconsistent with explanation.
- 2) Frequently absent due to medical problems or concerns about children.
- 3) Partner forbids her to attend scheduled appointments or classes alone.
- 4) Partner humiliates her in public, treats her like a child.
- 5) Excessively emotional, tearful, angry, depressed, nervous, or fatigued.
- 6) Isolated from her friends and family.

7) Physical injury during pregnancy.”

The idea behind having multiple sources of domestic violence information — telling everyone during orientation, flyers, posters, and screening — was to provide a number of avenues by which a woman could learn about domestic violence and be encouraged to disclose. A woman can choose to disclose to the on-site advocate directly or can disclose to her case manager.

If a woman discloses to her SRS case manager, the case manager fills out a “Turn-around Form: SRS Referral for OARS.” The woman is referred to OARS for assessment and/or participation, but is in no way obligated to follow up with or participate in OARS. The OARS advocate will then conduct an assessment of the client’s situation. After the assessment process is completed, the OARS advocate replies to the case manager’s referral using the “Turn-around Form.” The reply includes the following information: whether or not the woman was placed in the OARS program; whether or not OARS participation should be combined with other employment preparation services; whether or not the client is seeking a good cause exemption from child support enforcement; and why the woman has not been placed in the OARS program if that is the case. The advocate is the person who waives traditional work activity requirements (at either a full- or part-time level) by authorizing a client’s placement in the OARS program.

The on-site advocate is an assessment/crisis intervention person, NOT the long-term service delivery person. Her role is not to provide the BWTF services, but to link clients into those services. The only on-site service portion of OARS is a support group for OARS clients, and participation in this group is mandatory. During a client’s first meeting with the on-site advocate, she assesses basic issues such as how endangered the person is and any immediate crisis needs. The clients are told they can be in the OARS program either full- or part-time. During a second meeting, the advocate and the client review the details of her needs and her interest in OARS services. After the second meeting, the advocate starts placing the client into groups and developing her service plan. She refers the client to an array of BWTF services. She requires all OARS clients to participate in individual and group counseling. There are also optional service pieces, such as shelter, court assistance, and housing assistance.

The on-site advocate can encourage caseworkers to allow clients to use some of the employment support funds for emergency housing. Caseworkers have discretion over the use of support funds. Clients are only eligible for this money if they are meeting a work requirement, which for OARS participants means compliance with their OARS service plan. Although these funds are available, we were told by several people in different positions that caseworkers are reluctant to use them for domestic violence crisis needs.

The advocate monitors client compliance with domestic violence service plans. She initially tried to make monthly appointments, but now that she conducts the weekly OARS support group, she monitors people through that group. Before she created the group, it was hard for her to know if clients were attending their support groups at BWTF.

Integrated TANF caseworkers grant good cause waivers for child support enforcement. To do this the caseworker collaborates with child support enforcement workers, but ultimately can deny or approve good cause. In the case of domestic violence only one form of documentation is needed for good cause to be granted and for clients to be placed in OARS. What constitutes documentation has been loosened so that the on-site advocate's verification echoing the victim's statements can suffice.

Because the on-site advocate is not a state employee, she can advocate for women's safety without worrying about state TANF program compliance rules. If clients do not want to disclose domestic violence to their workers, they can go directly to the advocate. The advocate can maintain confidentiality, because as soon as a woman walks in the advocate's office door, she is a client of the BWTF. The only thing the advocate must tell the caseworkers is a client's employment status and service plan. The advocate has had to negotiate boundaries with workers in order to maintain client confidentiality and also not alienate workers.

ISSUES IN IDENTIFYING AND HANDLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

Staff Attitudes, Training, and Changes

Once the pilot project was developed, Central SRS and KCASDV conducted focus groups with case managers in the Topeka Area Office. The pilot project initially evoked mixed responses from SRS staff. Some staff thought the pilot was about "male-bashing" and some feared that women would "scam the system." Some staff felt they were already overworked and the screening and assessment process only added to their work. Other staff were very supportive of the pilot. In general, the focus groups helped to break down some negative attitudes toward domestic violence issues, but training was more crucial in helping to do this.

Just prior to the implementation of the OARS program in February 1999, the Topeka Area Office held mandatory training sessions for all TANF workers and clerical staff on how to use the program. Any interested child support enforcement and child welfare workers could also attend. The sessions were each a day long (6.5 hours) and held over the course of a week. A different group of about 20 to 25 staff were trained each day. In total, about 140 people were trained, and each participant received a training manual. Since that time, there has not been formal retraining to address staff turnover.

KCASDV, BWTF, and SRS were all involved in planning and delivering the training. Each day of training consisted of modules with different speakers, a survivor story by a former welfare recipient, and videos. There was also a focus group component to the training sessions, which helped to diminish the resistance of the audience. The trainers tried to provide a number of different presentation styles to reach as many people as possible, because people learn differently. Topics covered included local resources, logistics of protective orders, general domestic violence awareness, a survivor story, and an OARS program description. They devoted

the first part of the day to discussing domestic violence and the second part to discussing how to deal with domestic violence in the agency's work. The trainers also conducted a pre- and post-test of participants' knowledge about domestic violence.

Although the program first met with resistance from workers, it is now accepted by most staff. Despite this progress, current staff attitudes toward disclosure still vary. The OARS program works well for the SRS workers who support its implementation. It is going less well with the minority of workers who are not supportive of the program. As was discussed previously, a minority of case managers think the OARS program is a way for women to hide from work-related activities. Others find the program to be useful and important to the women they serve. The fact that OARS participation is considered a job readiness component is important for SRS staff attitudes. It is much more palatable for staff to think of women being placed into a work component than receiving a waiver from work requirements.

The Relationship Between SRS and the Domestic Violence Community

At the state level, the Central SRS office and KCASDV did not have a working relationship prior to the pilot project. The relationship was not negative, it just did not exist. The two agencies currently have a close working relationship. There is an organizational commitment on the part of SRS to work with KCASDV. Domestic violence is now at the top of the list when extra SRS funds become available. Likewise, the KCASDV's commitment to SRS is strong; one staff person devotes full time to dealing with welfare reform issues.

BWTF's relationship with the Topeka Area Office was mixed prior to the OARS program — it was adversarial in some cases and cooperative in others. Now the relationship is "easier." SRS and BWTF staff have more face-to-face interaction. The training has increased a sense of investment in the domestic violence issue among the SRS staff and BWTF staff now feel they have a warmer reception in the SRS office. The on-site advocate is a useful liaison for the BWTF, which is now better at handling problems that arise with SRS. BWTF is reaching more women than before because of the OARS program, but these women are not a different population of women than those they typically serve.

Level of Disclosure, Interest in Services, and Waivers

Between February and September 1999, a total of 2,006 new applicants attended SRS applicant orientation sessions. Only about 1,000 of these applicants were TANF clients. OARS received 97 disclosures and/or referrals of domestic violence or sexual assault cases. Based on these numbers, the disclosure rate is approximately 9.7 percent.

During the time period between February and September 1999, 22 unduplicated clients participated in the OARS program. These cases varied in length of participation and in full- or

part-time participation status. Women stopped participating in the OARS program due to lack of follow through; withdrawal of SRS application; ineligibility for TANF; and obtaining full-time employment. Few women want to participate in the OARS program. The women seem to prefer the work components to the domestic violence component. Also, few people have asked for a good cause exemption from child support enforcement.

Referrals to the OARS program came from a number of sources between February and September 1999 including:

- Self-referrals as a result of information received during orientation;
- Integrated caseworkers;
- Rescue Mission (a shelter not affiliated with BWTF);
- Current or past OARS participants referring friends; and
- Vocational rehabilitation.

Referrals to the OARS program were strong during the first few months of the program, immediately after the training. However, over time the referral numbers have dropped. A number of reasons may contribute to the decreased referrals to OARS including:

- A minority of SRS staff may have been hoping to have a quick cure for some problem clients and now they realize there is no quick fix when dealing with barriers to work;
- Some women do not follow through with OARS program participation — SRS staff may not understand why and be less inclined to refer;
- A minority of SRS staff who have domestic violence issues in their own histories are not understanding of women needing time away from work to deal with it;
- A minority of SRS staff may perceive the OARS program as a place to which women can be referred for a “place to hide” from work requirements;
- Some SRS staff feel they are protecting federal money from being misused; and
- Some SRS staff do not want clients to use time on their 60-month time limit for any reason other than work activity.

In addition to problems with referrals, clients may face barriers to disclosure such as:

- Some SRS staff understand domestic violence issues, while others do not. A minority of staff may convey to clients they are not understanding of the issues and this may make some women unwilling to disclose.
- Female staff get more disclosures than male workers.
- Women may feel disclosing domestic violence is too much information to provide to the SRS staff since they already need to know a great deal for clients to receive cash assistance.
- SRS staff do not know new applicants and have no rapport to elicit a disclosure.
- Meetings with SRS case managers are conducted in small carrels that do not have walls that extend to the ceiling. Therefore, a woman may not disclose if she fears she can be

overheard. (The on-site advocate's office is fully enclosed, so once in the OARS program, privacy is assured.)

- Some women may fear Child Protective Services and fear losing their children to the system.
- Historically, the relationship between SRS and its clients has been contentious and this may still affect client-worker interaction.
- Some women fear SRS in general — the caseworker represents another power person in the woman's life.
- Some women do not realize that the symptoms they have are part of their trauma experience and do not make the connection to disclose.
- Some women are not ready to disclose.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Topeka Area SRS Office is attempting to make progress on addressing domestic violence in an environment where little else has changed. A total culture shift has not happened in Kansas and staff have not yet universally adopted the idea that by addressing domestic violence they are helping clients address barriers to work and self-sufficiency. Efforts to identify domestic violence have improved in this SRS office. Despite this, however, SRS staff still vary somewhat in their willingness and ability to screen for domestic violence and refer to the OARS program for assistance.

Although a minority of staff are concerned about women using the OARS program as a haven to protect them from work and are reluctant to use employment support funds to address domestic violence-related emergencies, others find the OARS program to be an appropriate referral source for women. By allowing the OARS program to count as a work activity, the Topeka Area Office is allowing women time to focus on their domestic violence issues.

CHAPTER 5 ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Orange County has designed a comprehensive program to address domestic violence in the TANF caseload. This program is well-designed, but has met with many barriers in its implementation. Three aspects of the Florida system make the atmosphere more inhospitable to dealing with domestic violence issues than was true at other sites we visited: (1) the sanction policy, (2) the performance contract with a for-profit agency to deliver social services, and (3) the many layers of the program making it difficult for all the relevant agencies to communicate and coordinate. Compliance with TANF work requirements was the primary focus of the efforts in Orange County, with little focus on addressing barriers to work and self-sufficiency such as domestic violence.

We visited Orange County in December 1999. Information included in this chapter is based on interviews with the One Stop Career Center Project Director and the Assistant Manager of one center (from Lockheed Martin), the Director of Planning for the Work Force Central Florida WAGES Coalition, Work First Plus program directors and case managers (from the Department of Children and Families), and staff from the Harbor House, Orange County Center Against Domestic Violence. In addition, we observed an orientation session at a One-Stop Career Center and received written material from the center staff.

Since our visit, Orange County Department of Children and Families (DCF) no longer implements the Work First Plus (WF+) program described below. Instead a local service agency is implementing the program, along with Harbor House, Orange County Center Against Domestic Violence (the local domestic violence service agency).

ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County is located in central Florida and is home to one of Florida's most-visited cities, Orlando. In 1996, the median household income was \$34,558 and 13 percent of the residents in the county lived in poverty. The average unemployment rate in 1999 was 2.7 percent.

Orange County has a population of about 817,000, 79.1 percent of whom are white, 17.5 percent are African American, 0.4 percent are American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut, and 3.0 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. The proportion of the population who are of Hispanic origin is 12.3 percent. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing population in the region.

The TANF caseload in Orange County is about 90 percent female and primarily between the ages of 18-35. Approximately 25 percent of the clients in the caseload are of Hispanic origin.

STATE TANF PROGRAM AND ORANGE COUNTY VARIATIONS

Regionally Administered

Florida's TANF system is operated through the Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency Program (WAGES). WAGES has a state-level coalition that sets general guidelines for TANF administration. Local WAGES coalitions oversee TANF administration in their regions and have a great deal of flexibility in how to approach the process. Orange County is located in the Central Florida WAGES Board region, one of 24 WAGES regions in Florida. The Central Florida WAGES Board's primary function is to oversee welfare reform in a five-county area.

The Central Florida WAGES Board solicited proposals through a competitive Request For Proposals process to implement the WAGES program. The board now has a performance-based subcontract with Lockheed Martin to deliver social services in Orange County. Lockheed Martin operates One-Stop Career Centers and is responsible for integrating the Workforce Investment Act and WAGES initiatives. They receive some payment for up-front work with clients, and receive additional payment for initial job placements and 180 days of job retention for clients. Once clients are placed, case managers make an effort to follow up with clients, in part to ensure they make the 180-day mark.

Program Requirements

Florida has a four-year lifetime limit for cash assistance. Although the limit is four years, residents can only use assistance in two-year intervals. After two years of cash assistance, clients must wait three years before receiving two more years of assistance. Clients must be involved in work activity if they are receiving cash assistance — no exemptions are allowed. The work requirement can be deferred for a maximum of 12 months (for example, for medical/physical problems). However, deferment does not stop the 48-month lifetime clock and counts against the federal participation rate.

Florida policy allows clients to have assets up to \$2,000 and to have vehicles up to \$8,500 in value. Florida's diversion from cash assistance policy allows for two months of cash payments once per lifetime. In addition, the period of ineligibility between receiving the payment and TANF assistance is 3 months (Gallagher, Gallagher, Perese, Schreiber, and Watson, 1998).

Sanction Policies

Florida's sanction policy is stringent compared to other states we visited. Cash benefits are terminated as a result of the first instance of noncompliance and reinstated after compliance occurs (Gallagher, Gallagher, Perese, Schreiber, & Watson, 1998). Benefits are terminated after the second instance of noncompliance until 30 days of compliance occurs. Even food stamps are

terminated, except for children under age 12. Benefits and food stamps (except for children under age 12) are terminated for three months after the third instance of noncompliance.

THE APPLICATION AND CASE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

When clients in Orange County apply for assistance, they first go through eligibility paperwork with DCF staff, are given a flyer about the WAGES One-Stop Career Centers, and are sent to a center to “register for work.” WAGES registers them in a Job Bank, and clients must then bring proof of registration back to DCF for eligibility purposes. Once clients are deemed eligible for cash assistance, DCF sends an electronic notice to the WAGES One-Stop Career Center and clients are assigned to group orientation sessions. The whole process from application to assignment takes about a week. While clients are awaiting orientation notification they must make 20 job contacts.

The WAGES One-Stop Career Centers regulate clients’ participation in the program using the Passport System — a three-stage, inverted pyramid service structure. The Center provides few services to clients during the initial weeks of participation in the program, this being the tip of the pyramid. If clients are unable to find work, they are offered progressively more services, thus expanding the pyramid over time.

During orientation, clients are told about the passport system. Each client is given a “passport” and placed in “core” services, which entail: (1) attendance at two mandatory seminars (“how to locate job openings” and “tools for an effective job search”), (2) making 20 job contacts within a week, and (3) filling out an assessment form (the Holland Inventory) that day. If clients have not found jobs by the following week when they return with information about their 20 job contacts, they are placed in “intensive” services, which entail: (1) two weeks of job club, (2) a case management appointment to talk about educational opportunities, and (3) developing an Individual Employment Plan (IEP). Clients are allowed only two weeks of job club (which includes job search) per calendar year. At this point, clients can also complete the Career Scope, an in-depth career assessment tool.

If clients are unable to find work during intensive services, they are placed in the Community Work Experience Program — an unpaid community work placement program for clients who are not work-ready. Clients also meet with their intensive services case manager, who administers the TABE educational assessment and refers them to the training counselor. The training counselor decides if a training plan is feasible, and if it is, she takes over their IEP and refers clients to the training placement person. Only a small number of clients actually receive any training.

Contact with DCF staff occurs primarily around benefits eligibility, reauthorization, and sanctions. Contact with WAGES One-Stop Career Center case managers (Goodwill Industries staff under subcontract to Lockheed Martin) is governed by which level of services clients are

receiving (that is, clients receiving core services have little contact with case managers, while clients in intensive services or training may have much more).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTIVITIES

The Work First Plus program (WF+) was developed to assist WAGES clients who have barriers in their lives that inhibit self-sufficiency. It was modeled after an existing program in DCF called the Family Transition Program. The Family Transition Program began in November 1995, and consisted of two social workers hired by DCF to create a team approach for providing substance abuse and mental health services to TANF recipients. Clients were selected to participate in the program and their participation was mandatory. The clients were open to this program and to working with the WF+ case managers because the managers were not associated with the client's cash assistance.

In December 1997, DCF received money for the WF+ program. They adopted and adapted what they felt was a very successful program (that is, the Family Transition Program). Domestic violence was later identified as an additional barrier to work for families and became an additional focus of WF+, which initially focused on mental health and substance abuse. Harbor House (the local domestic violence service agency) was included in the program in July 1998. WF+ funds two community education specialists and six counselor/case managers as frontline Harbor House staff. One of the counselor/case managers is designated as the "WAGES coordinator." The coordinator oversees the collaborative relationships between the different agencies.

The purpose of the WF+ program is to identify barriers to work at the "front end" — to catch problems early and deal with safety issues so that DCF does not place unattainable requirements on clients. The program is supposed to help clients deal with their barriers to work and come back to the WAGES program able to "comply." The WF+ program services (including the Harbor House services) are not conducted at the One-Stop Career Center, but in WF+ offices, clients' homes, and at Harbor House.

WF+ staff were originally DCF employees (except for the contract with Harbor House), but now the entire program is implemented by community-based organizations. WF+ staff present information about the program during orientation. They discuss how the WF+ program fits within the goals of welfare reform by promoting self-sufficiency. They also educate One-Stop Career Center clients about depression and about past and present domestic violence. They explain that they are trained counselors who can be a resource for help. At the beginning of the WF+ program implementation, the orientation presentation was co-presented by WF+ staff and Harbor House staff. However, One-Stop Career Center staff decided that the orientation session included "too many presenters," and now only WF+ staff attend orientation.

After the presentation, all clients fill out the WAGES Core Services Screening Instrument, a form developed by the WAGES One-Stop Career Center staff, to which WF+ has added ten

questions including five that relate to domestic violence. The screening form is supposed to be administered by WF+ staff, who then make copies of the forms and contact clients who screen in for various barriers. However, the form is administered by WAGES One-Stop Career Center staff when WF+ staff are unable to attend orientation. In this case, the One-Stop Career Center staff provide copies of the forms to the WF+ program staff.

The WF+ screening form itself used to be a 30-item inventory covering physical, mental, and emotional problems, as well as domestic violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and substance abuse. Because the WAGES One-Stop Career Center staff also administered a questionnaire during orientation, a decision was made to limit the paperwork burden for clients. The screening form and the questionnaire were combined into a 21-item inventory. Ten questions out of the 21 relate to the barriers addressed by the WF+ program (five for domestic violence, three for substance abuse, and two for mental health). Clients respond “yes” or “no” to each of the questions. The questions currently used to screen for domestic violence are:

- “I have to be careful what I say or do around my partner.”
- “I have been threatened or harmed by someone in my household.”
- “I have a say in how money is spent in my household.”
- “My partner has kept me from working or caused me to lose a job.”
- “It is safe for me to go home today.”

When Harbor House staff were attending the orientation sessions, they received the screening forms immediately afterwards. While this is still the case for the WF+ staff, it is not the case for the Harbor House staff. WF+ or Wages One-Stop Career Center staff must make copies of the screening forms and send them to Harbor House staff for referral. In some cases it had taken up to two months after orientation for Harbor House to receive the screening forms. Because Harbor House received so few referrals they were concerned about whether or not they were receiving all the forms with disclosures. WF+ staff assured us that all forms have been sent to Harbor House, indicating a low disclosure rate.

Clients who screen in for mental health and substance abuse issues are referred to WF+ staff and clients who screen in for domestic violence are referred to Harbor House. The WF+ program and Harbor House have two referral streams: referrals based on the screening form used at orientation, and referrals by WAGES One-Stop Career Center case managers. If clients are working with WF+ staff on other barriers and domestic violence issues surface, they are referred to the Harbor House staff. However, the WF+ staff remain with the case to provide the full set of services beyond the domestic violence issues. It is the Harbor House staff who assess and document whether or not a person is a domestic violence victim. Through the WF+ program, Harbor House staff conduct an assessment of the case and report the results to either the WAGES One-Stop Career Center case manager or the WF+ case manager.

If a client is identified as having domestic violence issues, she is referred to the WF+ program and Harbor House, given a WAGES case manager (meaning she has moved beyond or skipped the core job activities), and placed into a “holding pattern” with regard to the WAGES work

requirement. In general, the holding pattern will last no more than 30 days. The WF+ program does not count as a valid work activity demonstrating compliance with TANF requirements. Therefore, the WF+ program is an activity that clients participate in while in a holding pattern for WAGES responsibilities or in addition to accomplishing WAGES responsibilities. During this time, clients are still in the denominator for the participation rate and are considered to be “participating in WAGES but deferred to WF+.”

One-Stop Career Center staff decide when clients are ready to come back to the WAGES program. At the completion of their holding pattern — which can be up to 30 days but may not be the full 30 days — clients enter into the program where they left it. Therefore, if they were identified as having domestic violence issues during orientation, they start again at orientation. A client can complete the holding pattern process and return to the WAGES program, but still remain involved in the WF+ program for continued assistance.

While working with a client on barriers to work, the WF+ staff try to be as open as possible with the case managers without divulging too much information about the client. Most of the WAGES One-Stop Career Center case managers take the advice of the WF+ case manager. However, sometimes the WAGES case managers do not take the WF+ advice regarding sanctions, because of the performance numbers they have to meet for compliance with WAGES activities.

Emergency assistance can be used to relocate victims of domestic violence if needed. The One-Stop Career Center staff are able to access these funds for clients in crisis.

WAGES clients may disclose domestic violence at any point during their assistance, but they are only asked specifically about domestic violence during the orientation. Harbor House also conducts a two-hour presentation at job club. Clients can, and do, disclose during these presentations.

ISSUES IN IDENTIFYING AND HANDLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

Staff Attitudes, Training, and Changes

The One-Stop Career Center’s atmosphere is focused on promoting work and meeting the requirements to receive cash benefits to avoid sanction. From the orientation and throughout the TANF process, staff convey to clients that work is their primary responsibility and that pursuing work is the only countable work activity available. Clients are encouraged to work or participate in the Community Work Experience Program even if they disclose domestic violence situations.

One-Stop Career Center staff use sanctions and clients are informed of the sanction policy within the first five minutes of the hour-long orientation session. Because of the atmosphere conveyed by the stress on sanctions, clients may be fearful of being sanctioned and may not disclose barriers to work as a result.

The One-Stop Career Center staff have very little contact with the WF+ program and Harbor House staff, and receive only a small amount of training about domestic violence. In the last year, Harbor House staff have conducted one half-day of in-house training for the One-Stop Career Center staff on identifying domestic violence issues and referring clients to their agency. The One-Stop Career Center staff want to be knowledgeable, but they do not want to become experts on the issue. Instead, they would rather rely on the WF+ program and Harbor House staff to address barriers to work.

Despite training about domestic violence, we were told that some One-Stop Career Center staff remain concerned about the orientation screening form for fear that clients will report false yes's to work barriers. This fear has not been substantiated. About 70 to 90 percent of the yes's on the screening forms have proven to be valid once they have been investigated by WF+ and Harbor House staff. WF+ staff have shared this information with the WAGES staff, but the negative attitudes and concerns regarding false reports remain a problem.

Also, changes and fluctuations in the implementation of the WAGES program have affected the activities addressing domestic violence in the One-Stop Career Centers. It has been difficult to solidify the collaboration between the One-Stop Career Center staff, the Harbor House staff, and the WF+ program staff because of changes in the structure of the One-Stop Career Center programs. The Lockheed Martin service program has reorganized three times since WF+ began, making it difficult to develop and maintain a collaboration among the three partners. Lockheed Martin has also experienced a large amount of staff turnover, further complicating the collaborative efforts of the program.

*The Relationship Between the Domestic Violence Community,
the Work First Plus Program, and the Wages One-Stop Career Center*

The One-Stop Career Center staff, the WF+ program staff, and the Harbor House staff have encountered many challenges when building their collaboration. The challenges have prevented them from implementing the program to address barriers to work as it was designed. In theory the goal is to build reciprocal relationships among agencies so they can assist one another in addressing the needs of TANF clients. There were indications during our site visit from interviews and observations that some resistance among all three parties existed regarding sharing information and that the groups have had difficulty communicating with one another. The agencies are territorial about their clients and do not want to share them. We were told that each agency has its own ideas about what clients need, that frustration has grown, and that the agencies lack trust in one another. The One-Stop Career Center staff are concerned about clients disclosing false barriers to work, and WF+ and Harbor House staff are concerned about clients getting what they need to address barriers to work either before being required to do unrealistic work activity or in conjunction with reasonable work activity goals. The distrust between agencies has been the biggest barrier to program success.

Communication problems have improved over time between WF+ staff and Harbor House staff, between WF+ staff and One-Stop Career Center staff, and between Harbor House staff and One-Stop Career Center staff. The changes in relationship with the One-Stop Career Center staff are attributed to changes in the nature of the WAGES caseload. Case managers are now only dealing with the “hardcore” welfare population. All the welfare recipients who could work in Florida are working and new recipients are moving through the system without reaching the stage where they would be assigned to a case manager. As a result, the One-Stop Career Center staff who are WAGES case managers are more willing to refer to the WF+ program to assist their clients. The WF+ program is more likely to be seen as a good alternative now than in the past.

However, a recently adopted DCF policy has added further strain to the relationship between the domestic violence community and DCF. DCF has taken an aggressive stance on children residing in homes with domestic violence. Children are now removed with little investigation from homes in which domestic violence occurs. Women who lose their children are being forced to address the domestic violence issue before they are allowed custody of their children. Although this policy is not directly related to the activities of the One-Stop Career Centers, it may affect women’s willingness to disclose domestic violence as a barrier to work.

Level of Disclosure, Interest in Services, and Waivers

Using the initial screening form, 82 percent of WAGES clients revealed at least one barrier to work. This proportion is lower now that the form has fewer questions, is not administered by Harbor House, and is not administered consistently by the WF+ program staff. In the past, few forms were returned with only “no” answers. Now, almost all the screening forms are returned with only “no” answers. The change in the disclosure rate indicates clients are not reporting barriers to work.

Disclosures during job club presentations have also decreased over time. The Harbor House staff are still allowed to conduct presentations during job club, but very few clients attended job club at the time of our visit. Since the WAGES One-Stop Career Center reorganized their services so that only “intensive” clients are allowed to attend job club, Harbor House staff reach very few clients this way.

In addition to lower disclosure rates, referrals to Harbor House had also decreased substantially. When we visited, Harbor House had experienced difficulty in receiving referrals and expressed concern about whether the forms were being sent consistently. Forms were definitely not being sent in a timely manner — in some cases it had taken up to two months before Harbor House received completed screening forms with referrals. The multi-tiered program approach created unnecessary delays in contacting clients. Since our visit, Harbor House has established a direct link to One-Stop Career Center staff to address this issue.

Follow-up services available to WAGES clients are rarely used. The holding pattern from the work activity requirement is available for up to four weeks, but often is not used. One-Stop

Career Center staff are reluctant to use holding patterns because the clients in these patterns count against compliance rates. Workers must meet performance contract requirements of their own, resulting in their unwillingness to identify barriers and use the holding pattern status. Likewise, the emergency relocation funds rarely are used. It is not clear that One-Stop Career Center staff are familiar with the availability of emergency relocation funds or if they are encouraged or discouraged to use these funds for victims.

Also, we were told that some women are reluctant even to apply for cash assistance in Orange County. Because of the fear that DCF will remove children from the home and because the WAGES sanction policy is so stringent, many women who use Harbor House services and who are TANF eligible are reluctant to apply for cash assistance. They would rather try and use other community resources to survive than become involved in the DCF and WAGES systems.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Orange County's WAGES coalition is making progress in addressing domestic violence among its caseload, because it has designed a comprehensive program to do so. However, the program has met many challenges in implementation. Three aspects of the context in which the program is implemented may influence its success. First, the One-Stop Career Centers are funded by a performance-based contract based on the proportion of their caseloads who are in countable work activities. This performance requirement may prevent some staff from being willing to identify barriers to work and assist clients in receiving services from the WF+ program and Harbor House. Second, the sanction policy employed in Florida may also create a hostile context and discourage some clients from applying for assistance or disclosing barriers to work for fear their benefits will be in jeopardy. Third, the DCF policy of removing children from homes with domestic violence may create a hostile context in which to ask women to identify domestic violence as a barrier to work.

In addition, the new screening form used by the One-Stop Career Centers has produced fewer disclosures. Although both the WF+ staff and the Harbor House staff were involved in the re-design of the form, the administration of the form and the form itself may both be flawed. Most counties we visited for this project, including Orange County, indicated that as TANF caseloads have declined, a greater proportion of the caseloads consist of individuals facing significant barriers to work and self-sufficiency. Therefore, disclosure of barriers should be increasing rather than decreasing. Even if domestic violence is disclosed, the Harbor House staff are not always aware of the referral in a timely manner to provide follow-up services. Some One-Stop Career Center staff are still unwilling to encourage follow-up services and place clients in a holding pattern status. They persist in placing the women in work activities.

Finally, opinions about the level of difficulty in coordinating efforts for the program varied among the three parties involved. It appeared to us that the One-Stop Career Center staff, the WF+ program staff, and the Harbor House staff have had difficulty in coordinating to assist

clients with barriers to work. However, relationships have improved since the program has been implemented.

CHAPTER 6 DENVER CITY AND COUNTY, COLORADO

Colorado has identified domestic violence as one of the areas of focus for county TANF offices. The city and county of Denver Department of Human Services (DHS) has taken this focus seriously and has initiated efforts to address domestic violence through screening and assessment efforts, as well as funding on-site domestic violence advocates to provide follow-up services. Although the city and county of Denver DHS has been more proactive in addressing domestic violence than many other counties in Colorado, it is still struggling to implement effective domestic violence services. The domestic violence services are provided in a TANF environment that is not fully supportive.

DHS continues to shift its TANF administration focus from eligibility determination to assisting clients with necessary services to reduce barriers to work. While efforts to increase supports for identifying and addressing barriers to work have been successful, a total cultural shift among frontline workers has not yet occurred.

We visited Denver in May 2000. The information included in this chapter is based on interviews with state-level Colorado Works domestic violence coordinators, as well as DHS administrators, Family Assessment Workers, Ongoing Caseworkers, child support enforcement workers, and family counseling program representatives, including the two on-site advocates from local domestic violence service providers. We conducted observations of the intake process and conducted a focus group with clients who disclosed domestic violence and who were involved in the Family Counseling Program. The information is also based on written materials provided by DHS.

DENVER COUNTY

The city and county of Denver are located in central Colorado at the intersection of the western plains and the Rocky Mountains. In 1996, the median income for the residents of the county was \$31,994 and 17 percent of the residents lived in poverty. In 1999 the average unemployment rate for the county was 3.1 percent.

The city and county of Denver include Colorado's largest metropolitan area and encompass the state capital, the city of Denver. The county has a population of approximately 500,000, 81.3 percent of whom are white, 14.3 percent are African American, 1.4 percent are American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut, and 3.0 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander. The proportion of the population who are of Hispanic origin is 25.6 percent. The TANF clientele are 11 percent white, 64 percent Hispanic, and 17 percent African American. (Ethnicity is determined by head of the household.) The staff at DHS reflects the same racial/ethnic diversity as the clientele.

STATE TANF PROGRAM AND DENVER VARIATIONS

County Administered

The TANF program in Colorado is called Colorado Works. This program is county administered, meaning that each of the state's 63 counties has its own version of Colorado Works (Berkeley Planning Associates, 1999). Some common elements do exist, but beyond basic state requirements the counties have a great deal of flexibility in how they administer the TANF program. The common elements include a five-year lifetime limit for cash assistance, a 24-month time trigger for participation in a work activity, and client cooperation with child support enforcement and child immunizations in order to be eligible for cash assistance. Allowable exemptions from participation include families with disabled children or adults, domestic violence cases, and child-only cases. The allowable asset limit is up to \$2,000 and one vehicle per household.

Sanction policies can vary by county. However, sanctions may not reduce Medicaid or food stamp benefits beyond what is allowable under federal policies. The state sanction policy for counties to consider is for a 25 percent reduction in benefits for 1 to 3 months for the first instance of noncompliance, a 50 percent reduction in benefits for 1 to 3 months for the second instance of noncompliance, and a termination of benefits for 3 to 6 months for further noncompliance. Counties have the option to (1) choose the length of time for reduction in benefits within the state-specified time frames, and (2) increase the reduction to full-benefit sanctions for the first and second sanctions (Gallagher, Gallagher, Perese, Schreiber, & Watson, 1998).

Counties have the option to offer state discretionary assistance for TANF-eligible applicants (Gallagher, Gallagher, Perese, Schreiber, & Watson, 1998). The state diversion policy is a lump sum payment equal to three months of cash assistance payments, but counties can determine the form of the payment, how often the payment can be received, and the period of ineligibility for further cash assistance after receiving payments. Additionally, counties may offer county diversion for applicants who are not eligible for cash assistance.

Although Colorado has identified domestic violence as an area of particular focus for counties since the implementation of Colorado Works, the state only adopted the Family Violence Option in 1999. In addition to the statewide availability of a formal waiver of work requirements and a good cause exemption from cooperation with child support, some counties have chosen to collaborate with local domestic violence agencies to address domestic violence in their caseload more directly.

Denver Program Elements

The Welfare Reform Board oversees TANF implementation in the city and county of Denver. The board members are mayoral appointees and include a welfare recipient, a representative from DHS, a representative from the mayor's office, and others. The board sets welfare policy for DHS, including the use of surplus TANF funds.

In the city and county of Denver, TANF workers have less than 30 days to open a case for cash assistance. During those 30 days a client can receive food stamps, child care and transportation assistance, and some supportive services. However, in order to receive supportive services a supervisor must first approve the transaction and the client's case must be opened in some form or other so the case has a number in the computer.

Each TANF recipient develops an Individual Responsibility Contract (IRC) with his/her caseworker. The first IRC is developed during an initial intake meeting with the Family Assessment Worker, and contains all the tasks that must be accomplished in order to be eligible for and remain on cash assistance. The IRC tasks are concrete, for example "attend typing class orientation on Friday June 3rd at 1:00 p.m." IRCs must include countable activities to be included in the TANF compliance participation rate, but can also include allowable activities. Countable activities are those that count positively toward increasing a state's participation rate (the proportion of the caseload that is engaged in federally accepted work activities). Allowable activities are those that the county accepts as activities that let a client avoid being sanctioned by DHS. However, clients engaged in allowable activities do not contribute positively toward the participation rate.

TANF benefits cannot be approved until a client has completed the countable and/or allowable work activity specified in her initial IRC. Clients must complete 34 hours of activity in 10 working days to be approved. Once clients are receiving TANF, to be included in state participation rates clients with children over six years of age are required to have 34 hours of countable activity per week, parents caring for children under six are required to have 22 hours of countable activity, and vocational rehabilitation clients are required to have one hour of countable activity. However, clients can meet county DHS requirements with IRCs that include both countable and allowable activities.

DHS has adopted both state and county diversion policies. The state policy is a lump sum payment equal to three months of cash assistance payments. The county policy is called Working Family Assistance and is a payment of up to \$1,000 for non-TANF-eligible families.

Denver Sanction Policy

The city and county of Denver TANF program has three levels of sanction. When clients fail to comply with their IRC requirements for the first time, their benefits will be reduced by 25 percent for one month. If clients continue to be noncompliant or fail to comply with activities a second

time, their benefits will be reduced by 50 percent. If clients fail to comply with activities a third time, they are ineligible for assistance for three months or until they comply, whichever is longer.

If a client does not follow through with tasks specified in the IRC, the first step is to ask the person why s/he is not complying with the IRC. If no adequate reason exists for the client's lack of follow-through, sanctioning may begin. DHS does not sanction many clients.

Work Activities

Countable work activities in the city and county of Denver include job search, work, Group Services (a job-readiness activity), and other activities. Group Services programs are not required for clients, but many participate in them. Group Services programs include self-awareness programs, Basic Office Survival Skills, and Independent Thinking Skills.

Other Services

In 1998, DHS issued a Request for Proposals to identify and fund support services for TANF clients, including mental health services, substance abuse services, and domestic violence services. The Family Counseling Program (FCP) within DHS grew out of this effort and now contracts with 13 community organizations to provide support services using TANF funds. Participating in the FCP is an allowable, but not a countable, activity. In other words, a client who participates in the FCP as part of her IRC would not be sanctioned by the county, but would also not be counted positively toward the state participation rate. The FCP provides a great deal of emergency assistance in the form of services and funding. However, FCP workers must have approval from a case manager through the IRC to spend funds on a client. Between July 1, 1999, and March 1, 2000, the FCP worked with 900 of the 2,500 total TANF cases.

In addition to the FCP, the Welfare Reform Board that directs TANF policies in the city and county of Denver has placed a major emphasis on stable housing, child care, transportation, summer youth programs, dental care, and expanded supportive services for grandparent kinship care. DHS also has a housing counselor on staff to assist clients in finding and applying for housing. The administration plans to fund four to six more housing counselors in the future, as finding and maintaining housing is an increasing problem in Denver.

THE APPLICATION AND CASE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Clients who apply for TANF first attend a one-hour orientation program. The orientation describes all the service options available through DHS, including the FCP. After the orientation a client meets with a Family Assessment Worker for intake. Clients are assessed for barriers to employment and develop their first IRC during this initial meeting, which occurs on the same day as orientation.

Clients are sent to meet with a child support enforcement worker immediately after the Family Assessment Worker finishes the initial intake process. Child support enforcement workers assist clients in obtaining child support. During this meeting clients are told about good cause exemptions from child support enforcement due to domestic violence, and the option for a commitment of non-disclosure by the Child Support Office in lieu of the good cause exemption.

Once a case has been approved for cash assistance, it is transferred from the Family Assessment Worker to an Ongoing Caseworker. The approval and subsequent transfer should take about a month, but it sometimes takes as long as two to three months. The Ongoing Caseworker develops a more elaborate IRC with the client and begins the ongoing case management process. The worker has contact with the client at least once a month, and often has more frequent contact with clients regarding IRC progress. IRCs are revised as appropriate throughout the client's participation in the TANF program. Ongoing Caseworkers have caseloads of approximately 45 clients, including a mix of new cases and long-term welfare recipients.

As part of the intake process, DHS staff are supposed to identify barriers to work, which may include domestic violence. The elements of the TANF system provide no formal incentives or disincentives for Family Assessment Workers and Ongoing Caseworkers to identify barriers to work, including domestic violence. However, the caseworkers are evaluated on caseload work participation rates, which require that clients be in countable activities.

Domestic violence can be identified at any point in the TANF process. A person can disclose during the intake process, to an Ongoing Caseworker, or to child support enforcement workers. In addition, some clients may be referred to domestic violence services through Group Services Programming.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTIVITIES

Clients are assessed for barriers to employment during the initial intake meeting with a Family Assessment Worker. At this point, clients have completed an assessment form that asks about experiences with domestic violence, as well as other employment, functioning, and mental health issues. (The specific question about domestic violence is "I am experiencing domestic violence problems" with a blank space for the client to mark.) The Family Assessment Worker should review the client's responses to these questions during the first intake meeting. In addition, the Family Assessment Worker provides the client with notification of the possibility of obtaining a waiver of the work participation requirement in domestic violence cases. In the city and county of Denver, about 30 percent of clients disclose domestic violence experiences during assessment, of which only a small proportion want follow-up assistance and referrals.

If a client has indicated that she is experiencing domestic violence, workers will conduct a follow-up screening using the Domestic Violence Checklist. This checklist provides the worker with more detailed information about the situation. First it asks, "Now, or in the past, have you been in a relationship where you were physically, emotionally, or sexually abused?" and provides

a definition of abuse as “pushing, slapping, shoving, and hitting; being kept away from family and friends; having your phone calls and activities monitored at home or work; threats to you or your children; threats to take your children from you; stalking, following, or harassing you; and marital rape/sexual assault.” The client is then asked if the abuse occurs/occurred with a current or former partner, if a restraining order has been issued against the abuser, if the order has been violated, if the abuser is the father of the client’s children, and if the client is afraid of the abuser.

The checklist also records the types of documentation provided by the victim regarding her domestic violence situation. The types of documentation include police reports, medical reports, statements of persons knowledgeable of the abuse, court or social services agency records, and other evidence. The final questions on the checklist ask clients if they think it would be harmful for them to participate in TANF program requirements, including training, subsidized employment, job search, or a job.

Clients who disclose domestic violence are referred to the FCP. Two on-site advocates from local domestic violence service providers work in the FCP (Project Safeguard and Safehouse Denver). The Safehouse advocate focuses on counseling and case management of services and the Safeguard advocate focuses on assisting with legal issues. The domestic violence advocates consistently remind the TANF workers about their services in order to encourage workers to ask about domestic violence during every client meeting. The advocates receive most of their referrals from TANF caseworkers, but also receive some referrals from child support enforcement, Child Welfare, Group Services, and other contractors.

The advocates, in conjunction with other support service providers in the FCP, will work with a client to meet her and her children’s unique needs, including safety planning, counseling, and further referral. The Family Assessment Workers (intake) and Ongoing Caseworkers refer to the on-site domestic violence advocates or to the FCP whenever necessary. The workers discuss domestic violence cases with the advocates and consider the advocates’ recommendations when developing IRCs.

If a woman is not in immediate crisis when she discloses domestic violence, the Family Assessment Worker will simply provide referrals to the FCP and may assist in setting up an appointment with the program. However, if the woman is in crisis at the time of disclosure, staff will call for immediate assistance from the on-site advocates. Staff are not trained to manage a domestic violence crisis, but to help screen and assess clients for the presence of domestic violence.

Clients can apply for state-level waivers from participation in work activity because domestic violence is identified as an allowable exemption. Clients can apply with Family Assessment Workers or Ongoing Caseworkers. However, no one does. There has been only one waiver request so far for the whole state.

In addition, a client can apply for a good cause exemption from child support enforcement during the initial application meeting with child support enforcement or at any point afterward. Good cause for child support may be documented with any of the following evidence:

- “Court, medical, criminal, child protective services, social services, psychological, or law enforcement records which indicate the alleged father or absent parent might inflict physical or emotional harm on you or the child.
- Mental health records or written statements from a mental health professional specifying concern for the emotional health of you or the child with regard to the alleged father or absent parent.
- Written statement from persons who may have personal knowledge of the basis of the claim.
- If the child was born after forcible rape or incest, evidence would include birth certificate or medical or law enforcement records.”

If good cause is denied, the client can re-apply and provide further evidence to justify the exemption. However, as with the Family Violence Option, few clients with domestic violence issues in their past apply for the good cause exemption, because they want to receive child support.

If a client discloses domestic violence during ongoing case management, the same process unfolds. If she is in crisis, the on-site advocates are immediately contacted. If she is not in crisis but is interested in follow-up services, she is given a referral to the FCP. Less than 10 percent of women in ongoing case management are interested in follow-up domestic violence services.

ISSUES IN IDENTIFYING AND HANDLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

Staff Attitudes, Training, and Changes

The atmosphere at DHS is somewhat ambivalent about domestic violence. Some workers spend a great deal of effort focusing on domestic violence while others do not. The response to domestic violence disclosures is inconsistent, with some clients receiving a great deal of support and assistance and other clients receiving very little.

TANF staff are trained on domestic violence issues for half a day twice a year. We were told that the training is very provocative and most staff are open to it. It focuses on the influence that domestic violence has over the lives of victims and how help can change the lives of these victims. Many staff recognize domestic violence issues in their own lives through training. Additional staff training about recognizing and addressing domestic violence is required. However, basic identification is only part of the issue. Further training on simple helping skills would give staff more skill and comfort with disclosure and referral, and would also give them ways to help clients feel more comfortable with disclosing.

We were told that staff resistance to dealing with domestic violence is decreasing over time. The increasing proportion of staff who now deal appropriately with domestic violence issues creates social pressure for all staff to do so. However, we were also told that a small minority of staff will not deal with domestic violence issues and will not refer to the FCP. In such cases clients needing help may not receive any assistance, or may be referred to the FCP via other avenues such as Group Services. They may also hear about the on-site advocates and make an appointment on their own.

Case managers are evaluated based on the proportion of their caseload involved in work activity. Despite this, the TANF workers primarily allow people to do what they need to do in order to address barriers to work. For the majority of workers the performance evaluation process adds stress to their job, but they still appropriately identify barriers. For a few case managers, however, being evaluated based on work participation rates is a disincentive to identifying barriers to work.

Through turnover, DHS has lost approximately 25 percent of the staff who were on board at the beginning of TANF. Some departures occurred in response to the shift in focus toward assisting clients with support services and providing incentives for work participation. Through the process of staff turnover, the Department increased the educational standard for a Family Assessment Worker. The new standard will require such workers to hold a degree in a social services field.

The Relationship Between the Domestic Violence Community and DHS

DHS had a funding relationship with local domestic violence service providers prior to the RFP process to acquire on-site domestic violence services. This made the process of involving such agencies in the Department easier. Members of the domestic violence community were eager to become more involved in the Department and were not concerned about being incorporated in its mental health services division, the FCP. Instead they were pleased the Department had a focus on domestic violence so early in the TANF implementation process.

Despite mostly positive relations, some tensions that existed between the domestic violence community and DHS in the past persist today. Some victim advocates get frustrated with TANF workers because of perceived lack of sensitivity about domestic violence. TANF workers get frustrated with victim advocates because of perceived lack of focus on promoting self-sufficiency. Having the domestic violence advocates on site has improved the relationship between the domestic violence community and the Department. Caseworkers are beginning to understand the benefits of having on-site advocates and the advocates can be accessed for information and assistance at any time.

Level of Disclosure, Interest in Services, and Waivers

The number of disclosures and referrals to the domestic violence advocates has increased steadily since advocates began working in the office. However, disclosure remains lower than the level of suspected domestic violence among TANF clients. A number of issues, either real or imagined, may influence the amount of disclosure and referral that occurs, such as:

- Pressures on the caseworkers to get women into work/countable activities;
- Women's discomfort with disclosing to their caseworkers;
- Women's fear that their receipt of benefits will be threatened if their caseworker knows about the domestic violence situation;
- Caseworker insensitivity to the issue and lack of education about how to recognize it;
- Lack of caseworker knowledge about how to build an IRC that jointly addresses domestic violence and self-sufficiency;
- Women may have domestic violence as one of multiple barriers to work and may not be able to address this barrier first; and
- Women's lack of interest in seeking services.

Caseworkers estimate that approximately 30 percent of the clients on cash assistance are dealing with, or have dealt with, domestic violence situations. Of these, only a small minority are interested in receiving follow-up services from the FCP. From within the ongoing caseload, as few as 10 percent of clients are interested in follow-up services. Only one client has requested a state waiver from work activity, and this was denied because she was already working (that is, she did not need the waiver).

Additionally, most clients in DHS are interested in pursuing child support, and only a small minority are interested in a good cause exemption. In a study of four Colorado counties, only 2.7 percent of all applicants for assistance were interested in a good cause exemption (Pearson, Thoennes, and Griswold, 1999). This study found that only 69 clients requested a good cause exemption between June and November 1996. Of those requests, 32 percent were denied because no documentation of domestic violence was provided, 40 percent were denied because the documentation provided was insufficient, and 28 percent were granted good cause (Pearson and Griswold, 1997).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

DHS is making progress in addressing domestic violence within its caseload, but a number of issues may influence the amount of progress made thus far. First, efforts to change the TANF climate toward a greater focus on barriers to work is still in progress. The extent to which staff focus on domestic violence varies. Also, staff performance is evaluated based on the proportion of their caseload who are in countable work activities. This performance requirement may prevent some staff from identifying barriers to work and assisting clients to receive services from the FCP program.

Second, the screening process for domestic violence results in fewer disclosures than suspected domestic violence cases. The initial assessment question regarding domestic violence may be difficult to answer for some clients with learning disabilities or limited education, or clients who do not recognize their situation as domestic violence. The question asks if a person is “experiencing domestic violence problems.” The term “domestic violence problems” may not be readily understood without explanation. Further, if the question is left blank, it implies the absence of problems, rather than being a cue to staff to conduct a more thorough assessment.

Third, as in other counties we visited, although the efforts to identify domestic violence have improved, how domestic violence is handled once it is disclosed is inconsistent, with some workers still unwilling to encourage and/or refer to follow-up services. The TANF climate in which workers make these decisions makes it less desirable for them to identify barriers to work.

CHAPTER 7 EL PASO COUNTY, COLORADO

El Paso County's Department of Human Services (DHS), like Anne Arundel County's DSS and Oregon's AFS, has structured its cash and other assistance programs in a manner designed to provide the most active help possible to families and other clients who may need them, in an office culture changed significantly from the old eligibility determination model. It has gone further than Anne Arundel County and Oregon in the degree to which it integrates its approach to families however they connect to the department (through TANF, child welfare, or other cash and non-cash assistance). As a consequence, its approach to domestic violence is likewise integrated across programs including the police response, owing in part to local philosophy and in part to the availability of a domestic violence enhanced response team that pre-dated TANF and is a national model of its kind. On the other hand, El Paso County does not have the advantage of Oregon's Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS, which is essentially an Emergency Assistance program limited to domestic violence victims) that makes it possible to offer substantial aid before a TANF case is officially approved. As with the other two "culture change" sites we visited, the atmosphere and approach of El Paso County's TANF program makes it relatively easy for clients to disclose domestic violence and get help to deal with it. El Paso County's disclosure rate varies between 20 and 30 percent of people going through assessment each month.

As Anne Arundel County did in a state-administered state, El Paso County DHS has taken advantage of the devolution of responsibility offered in Colorado's county-administered system to act flexibly and comprehensively. It has defined needed uses of TANF support funds to provide whatever will be most likely to help a family move forward, including resolving domestic violence-related problems. El Paso County DHS is quite unique in Colorado in its approach to assistance.

We visited El Paso County in June 2000. The information contained in this chapter is based on interviews with DHS administrators, TANF technicians, the good cause child support committee, the director of the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, and the on-site domestic violence advocate. In addition, we conducted a focus group with TANF clients who have disclosed domestic violence issues and have worked with the domestic violence advocate.

EL PASO COUNTY

El Paso County is located in Colorado about 90 miles south of Denver, at the base of Pike's Peak on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. The county population of about 500,000 is growing rapidly, and is expected to exceed that of Denver County within the next year. El Paso

County's largest city, Colorado Springs, is the second largest in the state and includes most of the county's population.

As of 1996, El Paso County's population was estimated to be 88 percent white, 10 percent Hispanic (including long-time residents of Mexican descent and recent immigrants), 8 percent African American, and 3 percent Asian. The county's estimated poverty rate for 1996 was 9.9 percent, with 14.0 percent for children (persons under 18). Median household income in 1996 was \$39,180 and per capita income was \$13,664. Female-headed households with children accounted for about 7 percent of all households. The average unemployment rate for 1999 was a very low 3.3 percent.

STATE TANF PROGRAM AND EL PASO COUNTY VARIATIONS

Colorado's TANF program is called Colorado Works. This program is county administered, so there is a different version of Colorado Works for each of the state's 63 counties. Common elements of Colorado Works, established at the state level by legislation, are a five-year lifetime limit for cash assistance, a two-year time trigger after which participation in work activity is mandatory, and client cooperation with child support enforcement and child immunizations. Minimum grant levels and maximum sanctions for non-participation in work activities are set by state law, but counties can opt to pay more than the state minimum grant level, and can choose whether or not to apply the sanctions. Sanctions may not reduce Medicaid or food stamps benefits beyond what is allowable under federal policies. The asset limit allowed is up to \$2,000 and one vehicle per household. Beyond these basic state requirements, counties have a great deal of flexibility in how they administer the Colorado Works program.

Colorado identified domestic violence as an area of particular focus for counties in July 1997 when it implemented Colorado Works. However, as a state Colorado only adopted the Family Violence Option in 1999. In addition to the statewide availability of a formal waiver of time limits and cooperation with child support on the basis of domestic violence considerations, some counties have chosen to collaborate with local domestic violence agencies to address more directly the issue of domestic violence as a barrier to work among their clients.

Work Activity, Exceptions, and Exemptions

Each participant in Colorado Works must develop and follow a plan for meeting work requirements. The plan is known as the Individual Responsibility Contract (IRC). State-established bases for exemption from participation in the work requirements (for up to 20 percent of the caseload) include a disabled head of household, a head of household caring for disabled children or adults, domestic violence, and child-only cases. Colorado divides activities written into IRCS into "countable" and "allowable" activities. "Countable" activities are those that comply with federal TANF definitions of work activities. "Allowable" activities are those that

individual Colorado counties choose to accept as work activity for the purpose of writing and monitoring IRCs. A client participating according to her or his IRC in a county-defined allowable activity will not be sanctioned, although that client will not contribute positively to the county's federally defined work participation rate. Thus "allowable" activities are, in effect, locally-defined exceptions or exemptions, but they do not stop the federal clock.

Colorado counties differ dramatically in the activities they allow as part of IRCs. El Paso County considers any activity that helps to reduce an identified barrier to self-sufficiency to be allowable. It also expends considerable effort identifying and addressing such barriers. Thus participation in substance abuse recovery, mental health treatment, remedial education, and extensive assessments of work capacity conducted by Goodwill Industries are allowable activities. In the same vein, things that women and their children need to do to escape from and recover from domestic violence, including changing residences; counseling for mother and children; attending to civil legal issues such as protection orders, divorce, and child custody and visitation; or criminal legal matters relating to the batterer, might all be allowable elements of a woman's IRC in El Paso County. IRCs can be changed at any time to reflect a client's current capacities, goals, and situation. It is common for women with domestic violence issues to have an initial IRC that incorporates goals related to domestic violence, and then to renegotiate the IRC once these issues have moved toward greater resolution. Also, if domestic violence issues surface while an IRC is in place, that IRC may be modified if any of its provisions would place the woman or her children in danger, or if there are things she needs to do immediately to assure the safety of herself and her family.

Sanctions

Colorado has a graduated sanctions policy, involving a 25 percent reduction in the grant for one to three months for a first instance of noncompliance with work requirements, a 50 percent reduction for one to three months for continued noncompliance or a second instance, and full sanction (termination of the whole grant) for one to three months for continued noncompliance or a third instance. However, counties have discretion in using sanctions. El Paso County DHS rarely uses any sanctions, and is proud to have achieved its results with almost all "carrot" and almost no "stick."

Family Violence Option

Colorado has had an approved Family Violence Option only since July 1999. Waivers are allowed that stop the 60-month clock as well as the employment clock. Requirements for verification of domestic violence are a county option. However, by the date of our visit in June 2000, only one formal waiver request had actually been filed in the whole state. All clients are supposed to be notified about the Family Violence Option, identification of domestic violence,

and available domestic violence services through an official sheet of paper covering all of these issues in writing. Actual practice varies considerably.

El Paso County Approach

Starting in 1997, El Paso County DHS has been involved in a radical restructuring of two of its biggest programs — TANF and child welfare — and reconfiguring the way that other support programs are engaged, with the ultimate goals of strengthening families, assuring safety for women and children, promoting self-sufficiency, and ending poverty. The county has incorporated over 90 community partner agencies into this support system, all of whom have representatives in the building where clients come to apply for TANF. It also uses all available ancillary supports such as child care, food stamps, Medicaid, educational and employment services, child support, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, housing subsidies and supports, and support group approaches to help families meet their goals. Where possible, existing non-TANF resources are enlisted to support families, but TANF funds are also used to supply these services and supports when programs do not exist or when existing programs do not have enough resources.

El Paso County DHS has also created two diversion programs using TANF funds. Diversion 1 is an emergency, once-in-a-lifetime payment for something that would enable a family with children to gain and/or keep employment — i.e., that makes it, or goes a long way toward making it, self-sufficient. Receipt of a Diversion 1 payment makes the family ineligible to apply for regular TANF for six months. Diversion 2 (“60-Day Empowerment”) offers families with children two months of cash assistance, following regular TANF eligibility rules. These families have to be job-ready or recently unemployed, and expected to secure employment and have no further need for assistance within two months. Diversion 2 can be extended for one more month if necessary, or the family can roll over into the regular TANF caseload if they still have no income. Neither Diversion 1 nor Diversion 2 count against the federal 60-month clock.

Once families become ongoing TANF clients, they are assigned to specialized casework teams. One specialized team of TANF caseworkers focuses on families that already are involved with child welfare or are at high risk for becoming so. For the very high proportion of child welfare families who are also TANF clients, TANF resources are used to help the non-abusing parent move toward economic self-sufficiency, address substance abuse and mental health issues, improve parenting skills, and provide a better and safer environment for children. For grandparents and other kin caring for children in TANF child-only cases, TANF funds are used to provide supports to the caregivers so the children do not become child welfare cases.

Another specialized team of TANF caseworkers focuses on long-term recipients (more than 24 months), while a third specialized team focuses on clients who can engage in immediate job search and employment. For TANF recipients with barriers to work, these teams use TANF funds to help reduce the barriers, including completing education, getting more training, or

receiving extensive employability assessments through Goodwill Industries. Another specialized TANF team serves teenagers growing too old for welfare dependence in their families of origin, plus those aging out of foster care. The county has developed an employment support program to prevent future dependence on welfare by building on assets, teaching goal setting, supporting educational achievements, and developing self-sufficiency strategies that ultimately will lead to employment. This program coordinates with the existing teen parent program (for teen parents who head their own TANF case or who are living in TANF families) that offers similar services. Other specialized caseloads include clients with disabilities or significant challenges to working, those engaged in education or training, and those with domestic violence issues.

CLIENT FLOW, INTERACTION OF COLORADO WORKS WORKERS WITH CLIENTS, AND PRESSURE POINTS

Assessment is the first step in applying for TANF in El Paso County. When prospective clients walk into the DHS office, they are asked to fill out an intake sheet giving identifying information plus who lives in their household, and referred to a member of the assessment team. Assessment, which occurs on the same day, can take anywhere from 15 minutes to two hours, depending on what types of issues or problems come up. The assessment worker and the prospective client together complete an “Employment Readiness Assessment” that covers employment history, personal strengths, potential barriers to work, child support, previous AFDC/TANF receipt and recent efforts to get help, transportation and child care needs, eligibility and appropriateness for diversion, and current living arrangements.

Once assessment is complete, the client is set up with an intake appointment, usually the next day. The intake worker handles the formal paperwork necessary to enroll someone in TANF and other benefit and service programs available through DHS. The time between the intake appointment and being approved as an official TANF case averages about three weeks. However, in emergencies it can be accomplished in as little as one or two days.

Approved cases are then transferred to specialized ongoing teams of caseworkers (called TANF technicians). The assignment to a specialized team depends on the characteristics of each client’s situation. The technician meets with the client to develop an IRC. Thereafter, the client is responsible for reporting periodically on fulfillment of the IRC provisions, and the technician monitors this compliance, offers supports that may be needed to help clients continue with their plan, or works with the client to modify the IRC if that becomes necessary. If the supportive services offered the client involve money, the technician has the authority to add those resources to the client’s EBT (electronic benefits transfer) card. These resources may include money for gas, child care, car repairs, counseling, and other supports. Using the money for its intended purpose is expected as part of the client’s IRC, and the technicians monitor it as such. Depending on the team, technicians may have daily, weekly, or less frequent contact with clients, but clients are always supposed to report at least monthly on their progress with IRC provisions.

Clients in El Paso County's TANF program are immediately pressured to do *something*, even though that something may not be job search or employment. Because this immediate demand is present, issues related to barriers to work may also surface immediately. If these barriers have not been disclosed during assessment and the development of the IRC, they may lead to noncompliance. Once barriers are disclosed, they can be incorporated into IRC provisions. In client interviews we conducted, it was clear that clients with domestic violence issues found it practically impossible to comply with job search requirements because their days were filled with counseling appointments for themselves and their children, children's health issues, and legal matters. It was also clear from client interviews that some clients did not find themselves connected to the domestic violence advocate or domestic violence services even though they had disclosed, nor did they (initially) have an IRC that took their domestic violence situation into account.

Attitude of El Paso County DHS Staff Toward Welfare Reform

As in many other jurisdictions trying to transform the role of people who were eligibility technicians into people who can really listen to and help clients, departmental leadership was strongly behind El Paso County DHS's redesigned program and its goals. But DHS ran into some problems bringing existing staff along, and eventually experienced high staff turnover (of almost 100 percent among eligibility technicians). Staff who left tended to be those with high school educations that did not prepare them to fulfill the more demanding roles required in the county's new programs, or who did not want to do that type of work. New job definitions and job descriptions have resulted in a staff engaged in direct client work who are largely college educated and trained in helping professions such as social work. The staff we interviewed like their work, and like El Paso County's approach to TANF and other services. But even they estimated that about 80 percent of the staff are on board with the new approach, leaving about 20 percent with mixed feelings or not fully complying with the spirit of the county's approach.

INTEGRATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES INTO THE INTAKE PROCESS

Clients have the opportunity to disclose domestic violence issues at many points in the assessment, intake, and ongoing case management process. Even at the reception desk, if they say something indicative of domestic violence (or if they come in waving a restraining order or police report), they may immediately be referred to the domestic violence advocate and the receptionist may alert the assessment worker to the domestic violence issues. There is an explicit domestic violence question on the Employment Readiness Assessment form, as well as a general question about any conditions that may exist that would make it difficult for the client to work. In addition, staff have been trained to probe for domestic violence, and they have the domestic violence advocate as backup and referral should they need her. (The domestic violence advocate's work with clients after disclosure is described later in this chapter.)

TANF technicians we interviewed described various techniques they use to probe for domestic violence issues. For assessment, these techniques include defining domestic violence for the client and being sure that the client understands that emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse are included. If the client discloses that she has *ever* been a victim of domestic violence, further questions include asking whether the client has ever received services for domestic violence, whether the domestic violence issue is resolved, and whether she wants to receive services now. If the answer to this last question is yes, the client is referred to the domestic violence advocate. In any event, the client is given literature describing the domestic violence services available in the community, and the domestic violence advocate's card in case she changes her mind about services.

The TANF technicians with ongoing caseloads with whom we spoke felt the training they have received has given them the tools to ask the right questions about domestic violence, do safety planning, cope with minor client crises, and feel more comfortable doing these things. They said that developing the IRC provides the greatest opportunity to discover domestic violence issues and understand how they might affect progress toward self-sufficiency and what types of assistance might be of use to the client. Clues they use as indicators of possible domestic violence include no recent job experience, erratic work history and poor job retention, reluctance to put children in day care (for fear of abduction), answers to where the client is living, who with, how she is meeting expenses, her freedom of movement, and similar issues.

The technicians also said that clients in their ongoing caseloads will “call them out of the blue” to describe a domestic violence situation they are in, when they have said nothing before. Sometimes the domestic violence incident has precipitated an immediate crisis, such as being beaten and then kicked out of a boyfriend's residence and having nowhere to live. When this disclosure happens, the technicians try to find out as much as possible about the situation to see what type of help might be needed, but they say that sometimes it is hard even to get the woman to come into the office to talk.

Coordination of TANF and Child Support Enforcement around Domestic Violence

One intake worker in El Paso County DHS is a specialist in child support issues. After applicants for regular TANF or Diversion 2 have completed their initial assessment, they meet with this worker, who assures that all of the information needed for child support decisions is included with an application. This worker often sees 70 to 80 prospective clients a week. Any information disclosed about domestic violence to the assessment worker is passed on to this specialized child support staff person. Those we interviewed felt that most of the domestic violence-related information comes from the regular assessment people, but the child support specialist also has a chance to learn some more.

When a client reveals that domestic violence is or might be a problem, the child support worker discusses with her the various options she has with respect to child support. These options

include going ahead with standard child support procedures, requesting non-disclosure of identifying information, or seeking a good cause exemption from cooperation with child support. “Non-disclosure” is an in-between option that lets the county go ahead with attempts to collect child support (which the women usually want), but prohibits disclosure of information about the woman’s whereabouts or contact information. Once the difference between non-disclosure and good cause exemption is explained to women, DHS staff say that women usually choose non-disclosure rather than good cause. For instance, in October 1999, only 13 of 350 applicants (4 percent) wanted a good cause exemption. Nevertheless, they have more cases being approved for good cause, simply because the screening and assessment procedures are identifying the problem among greater proportions of TANF applicants, and they also have more cases with existing support orders.

Once the application file is complete, a supervisor reviews it for good cause. This supervisor has a background in child welfare, and leads a team specializing in child-only cases and TANF cases that also are involved with child welfare. Even child-only cases are reviewed with respect to good cause exemptions from child support enforcement, because there could be continued threats to the children. A special committee meets once a month to review and approve good cause applications. The department has expanded the variety of sources it will accept as documentation of domestic violence for good cause, which now includes newspaper stories and witness testimony as well as restraining orders, police reports, medical reports, and court findings.

Two significant problems were mentioned with respect to handling domestic violence issues within child support enforcement. One had to do with good cause, and one with non-disclosure. In Colorado, once good cause is applied for, the child support computer system suspends the case; when good cause is approved, the computer system actually *closes* the case so it no longer appears in the system. But the state still considers that the absent parent owes child support. If, at a later date, the custodial parent decides that she is no longer in danger and wants the child support, she can reapply and her case will be reinstated. At that time, the state will try to collect child support retrospectively for all periods during which it would have been owed. El Paso County DHS recently had the situation of a closed case in which an absent parent paid his child support even though the county was not demanding it. His check for \$1,500 was returned to him because the computer system had no open case against which it could be credited. (DHS quickly figured out how to accept the money, by reopening the case, and requested that the absent parent resubmit the check.)

The problem with non-disclosure is potentially more serious and less easily resolved. The *child support agency* can promise that *it* will not reveal any information about the TANF client’s whereabouts, and can keep its word. But as soon as the case goes to court and the court enters an official child support payment order, the custodial parent’s contact information becomes a matter of public record, beyond the control of the child support office. Any absent parent, including batterers, can use it to find the custodial parent. In addition, both parents are obligated to keep the court informed of their whereabouts, should they move. The child support office can request that the court “seal” the records of particular cases, which would produce non-disclosure of the

woman's information. But it also produces non-disclosure of the absent parent's information, and the child support office itself sometimes needs to use this information to track down absent parents and collect child support. So the danger of making the woman's information accessible to a batterer is quite real, despite promises made through the non-disclosure procedures.

APPROACH FOLLOWING DISCLOSURE

There are two aspects of El Paso County's approach to TANF cases following disclosure of domestic violence. The first is the role of the domestic violence advocate. The second is the role of the TANF technicians for the many cases that never become part of the domestic violence advocate's caseload.

Between 20 and 30 percent of clients receiving an employment assessment every month disclose present or past domestic violence. The assessment team verbally notifies clients about the possibility of services, and asks whether the client wants them. The client is also told that receipt of services is voluntary and that their TANF eligibility will not be affected by their decision with respect to domestic violence services.

Role of the Domestic Violence Advocate

At least half of the clients revealing domestic violence do not want further services. For these women, the assessment team notifies the domestic violence advocate of their disclosure, and the advocate does a one-time contact just to be sure there is no desire for services, reinforce the option to call at any time, and convey information about services in the community. For clients who do want services, the domestic violence advocate performs either a short supportive/counseling function or a longer-term case management function. For the short-term group, the advocate focuses on what will get them on their feet the fastest, trying to find anything to help clients and their children gain confidence in their ability to cope. These clients are also placed with one of the specialized ongoing caseworker teams to work out their IRCs. For the clients with longer-term domestic violence issues, the domestic violence advocate and one eligibility technician share a caseload. The eligibility technician handles the clients' applications for and ongoing involvement with various benefit programs, including TANF, while the domestic violence advocate handles the domestic violence-related aspects of the cases.

About half of the prospective TANF clients who disclose domestic violence end up working with the domestic violence advocate. All of her ongoing clients are already out of the domestic violence relationship. She has had repeat referrals, meaning that the same client has been referred to her several times before the client finally comes for help. But she has never had a repeat *client*, coming back after the advocate has worked with her. She characterizes the women she works with in several ways. A few have a plan, and she tries to help them accomplish it. These cases can be very short, sometimes as short as 6 to 8 weeks. A much larger middle group

takes “poking and prodding.” She talks with them about their options, helps them understand cycles and waves, and so on. For many clients, they do well for a time and then things fall apart. They tend to lack decision-making skills, in part because they have not been allowed to make decisions in their relationships, and in part because they are reluctant to take the responsibility for making their own decisions. For most of this group, going to therapy to learn to function on their own is their work-related activity. Finally, a few clients want to turn themselves over to her to make all their decisions for them — in effect, to rescue them, not to support them to help themselves. When she keeps giving them options but doesn’t tell them what to do, they can become quite angry. Finally, some clients in her caseload will clearly fall into the “exempt 20 percent,” as they have multiple barriers to self-sufficiency.

Role of the TANF Technicians

Many clients who disclose domestic violence at intake, and still more who do not disclose until later, become part of regular TANF caseloads. The TANF technicians in charge of these caseloads have been trained by the domestic violence advocate, and may be able to handle the domestic violence-related aspects of their cases themselves. They may also consult with the domestic violence advocate, who will usually discuss the case and suggest options to the technician, but never meet the client. The technicians may also refer a client to the domestic violence advocate for counseling or connection to other services, while still retaining the client in their own caseload. The technicians’ biggest complaint about the domestic violence advocate is that she may have a hard time getting back to a client quickly. It may be an hour, or it may be as much as 10 days. As the domestic violence advocate has taken on more and more administrative and training responsibilities, this time frame has become longer. DHS’s plan to hire another domestic violence advocate should relieve this situation.

Availability of Resources

When women come to a TANF office with current domestic violence issues, they are often in a situation of immediate crisis. They will have safety needs, often housing needs, and often other needs that cannot wait. In El Paso County, despite a major commitment to help these women with domestic violence issues and a major investment of TANF funds for supportive services, TANF funds cannot be expended unless and until the client’s case has been approved. This occurs because these TANF funds must be attributed to specific cases (i.e., case numbers in the computer system), and that is impossible until there is a case with a number. Therefore the three-week average period before approval of a TANF application can be a real problem in getting emergency resources to women with immediate domestic violence issues. The ability to get an application approved in a day or two thus becomes crucial; to make it happen, the intake worker must be willing to give the case top priority and attend to it immediately. Most, but not all, intake workers will do this. Alternatives to using TANF funds do exist, but the domestic violence advocate tries to use them sparingly. These alternatives include a stay at the local

domestic violence shelter, if it has room; emergency housing funds available through DVERT; and emergency housing funds available through the contract that DHS has with the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. The emergency housing funds can be used to purchase several nights in a motel or hotel. The Center will also offer immediate counseling services through its contract. But for maximum access to the supportive services available through TANF funds, fast-track approval of the client's TANF application appears to be essential.

PREPARING STAFF TO HANDLE SITUATIONS INVOLVING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DHS prepared for the new prominence of domestic violence issues as barriers to work in several ways. It used TANF funds to contract with the local domestic violence program for an advocate to be stationed full-time at the TANF office. This advocate was to handle many clients with domestic violence herself, help other staff work with other clients, and train staff to feel comfortable addressing domestic violence issues. This advocate began work in January 1998, six months after the state's TANF program took effect.

As part of the agency's preparation for dealing with clients' domestic violence issues, the domestic violence advocate developed an agency-wide domestic violence protocol to govern notification, screening and assessment, and ongoing interactions. She developed a domestic violence screening tool, and trained DHS employees (including people other than TANF workers) in standard procedures for working with clients who had a history of domestic violence. She did the same for child support good cause notification and processing procedures. She developed a training program in conjunction with DVERT (the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team) that targeted all DHS supervisors, and was designed to help them identify staff affected by domestic violence and offer appropriate assistance. She also provides ongoing training to technical staff, case managers, child welfare workers, and on-site community partners. Over the years it has become clear that this ongoing training is essential both because of regular staff turnover and because it has taken a while for existing staff who may have domestic violence issues of their own, past or present, to get comfortable with doing their job when clients have active domestic violence issues. In addition, the domestic violence screening form and domestic violence handouts have been translated into Spanish.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

The Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (hereafter, the Center) is El Paso County's primary service center for domestic violence. The Center offers many programs of its own, including a 24-hour crisis line providing crisis intervention, information, and referrals; a shelter that offers its residents case management, education, counseling, and support; a children's program operating both in the shelter and in local schools; advocacy for victims with restraining orders, safety plans, and court accompaniment; a counseling program offering group and individual counseling to men, women, teenagers, and children; and a courtwatch program to

monitor judicial proceedings. The Center also has a TANF-funded contract from DHS to support the domestic violence advocate position at the TANF office plus significant resources for counseling and emergency housing for TANF clients. The Center also works with the Colorado Springs Police Department and 21 other community agencies in the DVERT (Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team) to target families at high risk for lethality and offer enhanced victim advocacy and intensive containment of the perpetrator.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMUNITY AND THE TANF OFFICE

Relationships between the Center and El Paso County DHS are very close. The Center's executive director and DHS officials describe the relationship as a partnership that includes program development work, contractual arrangements, and co-location. DHS is getting ready to assign a TANF eligibility technician to DVERT, to give a woman on-the-spot information about her eligibility for various government benefits at the time when police are first responding to her call and she may be deciding whether or not to leave. The domestic violence advocate working on contract to the Center but stationed at DHS helps DHS *staff* as well as DHS clients deal with domestic violence issues, by providing information and referrals when a staff person reveals a problem. In addition, the extensive training provided to DHS staff by this advocate has significantly increased the DHS staff's comfort level in dealing with domestic violence issues among TANF clients, and provided them with knowledge of resources. As a consequence, many DHS staff now feel confident enough in their own assessment of a woman's situation that they often act on their own to make referrals and IRCs without referring every case to the domestic violence advocate. The workload of the domestic violence advocate has increased sufficiently, between more case referrals (due both to better screening and assessment and greater caseworker comfort with the issue) and the training and staff development responsibilities of the position, that DHS is preparing to hire a second domestic violence advocate to share the workload.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

If one focuses on the difference between pre-TANF and current staff approaches and attitudes, El Paso County offers one of the extreme examples of changes in staff reactions to working with domestic violence issues. However, the underlying, essential changes that took place were ones of staff turnover as the nature of the job changed from AFDC and establishing eligibility (being the "money police") to TANF and offering services to promote self-sufficiency. Once these changes were reasonably complete, entailing very high staff turnover and changes in job descriptions and qualifications, additional domestic violence-specific training, technical assistance, and experience have still been necessary to create the current atmosphere of support.

The presence of past or present experiences of domestic violence among staff members, including domestic violence in their families of origin or extended families, has sometimes made

it difficult for staff to offer neutral and professional support to clients struggling with these issues. The availability of the domestic violence advocate has worked in a number of ways to help staff handle themselves so they can work professionally with clients. Training has been available, and it helps. But it also helps that staff can go to the domestic violence advocate to get referrals for additional assistance at domestic violence services in the community (most prefer not to use the DHS employee assistance program), and that staff can get direct help through case consultations with the domestic violence advocate, to think through the best options for the situations of each woman.

El Paso County DHS obtains a reasonably high level of disclosure of domestic violence (20 to 30 percent of applicants per month). While everyone suspects that the reality is even higher, this level would be the envy of most places in the country, assuming they were actually trying to identify domestic violence issues in their TANF caseloads. It is important to note, also, that only about half of the women who disclose actually want services, and a good proportion of this group want only referrals and not a level of services that would require including domestic violence-related activities in their IRC. But the department must be doing something right about its approach to domestic violence matters to have this many women willing to reveal that domestic violence has been an issue in their lives. DHS uses two levels of formal written screener (one question on the Employment Readiness Assessment, and an entire formal domestic violence screener if that question is answered affirmatively). Assessment workers examine the pattern of responses on the employment assessment and probe for domestic violence issues if there are indicators that domestic violence might be a present or have been a past issue. It is also critical to the level of disclosure obtained that El Paso County is set up to discover *and address* all types of barriers to employment and self-sufficiency. So the fact that county workers succeed in discovering domestic violence issues is in part attributable to their interest and skill in discovering barriers of all varieties.

Waivers of work requirements for domestic violence reasons are basically irrelevant in El Paso County, because domestic violence-related activities are built into clients' self-sufficiency plans as allowable activities. However, we were told about two types of problem that may create difficulties in El Paso County for women with pressing domestic violence issues. The first is the problem of needing to have an open TANF case in order to access the TANF funds the county has set aside for supportive services.

The second issue has to do with how an applicant's assets are counted in determining eligibility for TANF. Colorado, and therefore El Paso County, counts any jointly held assets, such as houses and cars, as part of the woman's assets, whether or not the woman has any control over them (or even access to them if she has left the batterer). As these assets may be substantial, this method of counting may create eligibility problems for women with domestic violence issues. Oregon, for instance, solves this problem by including in eligibility calculations only assets that the woman controls. A related issue is the maximum allowable value of a vehicle. Colorado sets this value at \$2,000, thereby dooming most clients to the threat of repeated breakdowns and related expenses of car repair. Even if the county will use TANF funds to pay for car repair, the

process is disruptive, and consumes a client's time and energy that could be better spent on other things.

All in all, El Paso County's TANF program is set up very well to assist clients who have domestic violence issues. However, even in a program that has placed so much emphasis on addressing barriers, including domestic violence, issues relating to staff attitudes and training, and to bureaucratic arrangements and rules, still need regular attention. In addition to the practical lessons that El Paso County has to offer with respect to "how to make it work," it also offers lessons in the level of effort that must go into *maintaining* a good program once the basic framework has been set.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This project was designed to learn as much as possible about practical and effective ways that state and local TANF programs can address issues of domestic violence among their clients and applicants. Approaches may include formal state adoption of the Family Violence Option (FVO), and/or other approaches.¹ However, alternatives to FVO waivers may be equally or more meaningful in the context of a particular TANF program. A number of earlier project activities (annotated bibliography, 1998 and 1999 telephone surveys of state TANF and CSE agencies, November 1998 conference) culminated in visits to seven counties in five states, taking place between August 1999 and June 2000.

This report focuses on the findings from those site visits, which were designed to answer questions arising from the earlier activities. Major issues we wanted to examine included:

- The structure of the entire TANF application process (including the staff and program incentive structures);
- Procedures for screening and assessment;
- Factors affecting level of disclosure;
- Women's reasons for and against disclosure;
- Consequences of and supportive services following disclosure;
- Staff training issues; and
- Evaluation issues (evidence for the effectiveness of the approach).

The preceding six chapters have presented details of program approaches in the sites we visited. This chapter pulls together cross-cutting themes from the different sites and draws implications for the design of programs likely to be effective in identifying and addressing domestic violence issues among TANF clients and applicants.

IMPORTANCE OF STATE TANF OBJECTIVES

By the time we finished the site visits, we had become particularly impressed by the central importance of a state's or county's basic approach to TANF in determining the nature and success of its approach to domestic violence issues. We characterize the approaches we saw by their relative emphasis on "carrots" and "sticks" to prompt TANF applicants and clients toward employment and eventual departure from the TANF rolls. In the TANF case, "carrots" are

¹ Formal state adoption of the FVO gives states the ability to obtain relief from potential federal penalties for failure to meet work participation rates, or if the state wishes to carry more than 20 percent of its caseload past the 60-month federal lifetime limit.

positive incentives and supports to move toward self-sufficiency, including a relatively liberal list of activities that “count” in the state’s or county’s program, and the use of TANF funds to help remove barriers that would prevent self-sufficiency. “Sticks” available to TANF are the rules of engagement (shorter or longer time frame before work is required, stringency of the work requirement, and speed and severity of sanctioning for noncompliance). A relatively greater emphasis on “carrots” corresponds, in the sites we visited, to a relatively greater concern with attending to client needs. Conversely, a greater emphasis on “sticks” corresponds to a greater concern with preventing clients from “getting away with something.”

A state’s or county’s basic approach to TANF played a central role in determining the nature and success of its approach to domestic violence issues. Emphasis on using positive incentives corresponded, in the sites we visited, to a relatively greater concern with eliminating barriers to work. This concern translated into opportunities for clients to disclose domestic violence, and for the TANF staff to offer assistance in dealing with it.

Among the sites we visited, El Paso County had the greatest emphasis on “carrots” without “sticks,” while Orlando had the greatest emphasis on “sticks” without “carrots.” The other sites were in between, with the Oregon counties being closest to El Paso County in their emphasis on “carrots” and the other sites using both but being somewhat more inclined to use positive incentives. It is also important to note that *every* county we visited made immediate demands on clients to participate in *something*. Participation could have been in job search, employment readiness, actual employment, or activities to reduce barriers to work. But none of these sites, whether they concentrated on “carrots” or on “sticks,” allowed new clients to do nothing and still receive cash assistance. Although their program rules described a 24-month time trigger after which clients had to be involved in work activity, no new clients in these sites were granted the luxury of waiting 24 months before pressure for participation began.

ELEMENTS OF PROGRAM OPERATIONS

A program’s relative emphasis on “carrots” versus “sticks” manifested itself in many ways. Some of these typified the entire TANF program independent of the issue of domestic violence, while others were specific to the program’s interest in identifying and addressing domestic violence among its clients and applicants. We examine awareness, understanding, and comfort levels; tools for identifying and handling domestic violence situations; resources for supporting women with domestic violence issues; and a wide variety of issues arising in actual practice.

Awareness, Understanding, and Comfort Levels

The programs that did the best at identifying domestic violence issues were those set up to identify *all* major barriers to self-sufficiency — that is, those with a strong orientation to use “carrots.” Programs focused more on immediate employment rather than on longer-term self-

sufficiency were not well set up to identify any type of barrier, and the same was true for domestic violence issues.

The TANF programs that focused on identifying and reducing barriers recognized how different these goals were from traditional AFDC goals. They also recognized how different the daily activities

The programs that did the best at identifying domestic violence issues were those set up to identify *all* major barriers to self-sufficiency.

of program staff would have to be from the traditional role of the AFDC eligibility technician if the new goals were to be achieved. Program administrators knew they would have to change the orientation of all staff who interacted with clients. However, probably very few administrators realized how difficult it would be to make this change, how long it would take, how radical it was, and how much ongoing support would be needed to maintain it.

If one really wants to help clients achieve self-sufficiency, and wants to enlist their own commitment to this purpose, one will be far less likely to succeed if interactions with clients begin in an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion such as the atmosphere that typified “the old AFDC way.”

Several sites we visited described the old attitude as “protecting the agency’s money from the clients,” and some sites related that they still had staff for whom this was the primary attitude. There are places where this attitude is still considered appropriate, but such locations are never going to learn a lot about their clients’ problems, including issues

with domestic violence. If one really wants to help clients achieve self-sufficiency, and wants to enlist their own commitment to this purpose, one will be far less likely to succeed if interactions with clients begin in an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion such as the atmosphere that typified “the old way” that still characterizes some programs. The agencies that did the best in getting clients to discuss domestic violence issues were those that had changed the flavor of all staff interactions with clients, expressing verbally and in actions an attitude of “we really are here to help you.” It usually took determined leadership plus significant levels of staff training to accomplish this reorientation. It also often took a good deal of staff turnover, and replacement with people who wanted to do, and were being asked to do, a completely different job.

Tools for Identifying and Handling Domestic Violence Situations

During the course of our site visits, we encountered many different “tools” that appeared useful for identifying and handling clients with domestic violence issues. The first of these was the ***overall ambiance of the TANF office***. Programs that were serious about addressing domestic violence issues tended to be those with a strong emphasis on using “carrots.” These programs had

Programs that were serious about addressing domestic violence issues prominently displayed anti-violence posters, brochures, and other materials that both conveyed information and created an atmosphere suggesting that this was a safe place to disclose.

anti-violence posters all around their waiting rooms; brochures and other information about domestic violence services side by side with brochures for every other variety of self-help, training, or service program or activity in which clients might be interested; and posters and other materials prominently displayed in intake and assessment worker cubicles. It was very clear walking into the office that this was a place where people would not be surprised, shocked, or condemning if one disclosed domestic violence. The same was true for other barriers, such as substance abuse or mental health issues.

A second type of tool was *a clearly phrased screening question or two as part of the initial application for aid*. The biggest concern about these questions was whether they should use the words “domestic violence,” and how explicit or general they should be. To summarize the views of the many caseworkers we talked with on these visits, who had used forms with a variety of question wordings, applicants and clients often do not respond affirmatively to the words “domestic violence,” even when they are living in a violent household. They have not labeled their situation in this way.

Oregon’s intake form asks “Is your housing unsafe?”, “Do you need to get away from an abusive situation?”, “Do you need a place to live?”, and “Does your partner or spouse make you afraid by threatening, yelling, or physically hurting you or your children?”

Receptionists, intake and caseworkers reported their feeling that these questions worked well to elicit disclosure, in part because of the way

they were phrased and in part because if an applicant hesitated and therefore left the items blank, the workers used this as a clue to probe in greater depth. The two Colorado screening questions we saw, “I am experiencing domestic violence problems.” and “Have you ever been in a domestic violence situation?” use the words “domestic violence,” and intake/assessment workers expressed their concern that applicants might not understand the questions or apply them to their own situations. However, an advantage of these questions is their inquiry into *lifetime* experiences rather than immediate ones. Women are often more willing to admit past rather than current domestic violence problems, so an affirmative answer to these questions may provide an intake or caseworker with the opportunity to probe for continuing or current domestic violence-related service needs.

If the goal is to maximize the probability that an applicant will provide hints warranting further probing for issues related to domestic violence, then the questions will work best if the client has to check “Yes” or “No.” This format means an item left blank, or failure to answer, is a meaningful response that elicits a probe.

If the goal is to maximize the probability that an applicant will provide the TANF staff with clues warranting further probing for issues related to domestic violence, then the questions will work best if the client has to check “Yes” or “No.” In this circumstance an item left blank, or failure to answer, is a meaningful response that elicits a probe. Workers told us that this question structure was more effective than forms asking clients to “check all that apply” from a list of potential barriers. A totally blank page on such a form conveys “no problem” rather than reluctance to answer. These initial screening questions, coupled with the office ambiance, seem more

calculated to elicit disclosure than either presenting the client with written materials about domestic violence and their options, or complete reliance on verbal questions from an intake or assessment worker, however sympathetic or persistent. Worker discomfort with completely free-form inquiry is also suggested by the reports of more than one worker that they made up their own “screening questionnaire” when their TANF program did not supply one.

Workers felt that extensive screeners were useful *after* one knew there might be an issue, but were too lengthy and intrusive to use as the initial tool for detecting possible domestic violence problems.

A third tool was a *more extensive domestic violence screener* used once a worker had some indication that the client might have domestic violence issues. Most of these screeners included questions about verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse and non-violent controlling

behaviors as well as physical violence. Workers reported that these screeners were useful *after* one knew there might be an issue, but were too lengthy and intrusive to use as the initial tool for detecting possible domestic violence problems.

A caveat with the use of any screener questions, however brief, relates to creating the conditions that will make a woman feel safe in answering the questions. Questions asking for disclosure should be preceded with information about the TANF office’s interest in identifying barriers to work and helping clients address these obstacles. Further, a TANF program, and TANF workers, should never pose these questions to clients without commitments to (1) inform clients about how the information will be used, and (2) use the information in confidence to assure the client’s safety.

A final set of tools was embedded in the TANF procedures of some of the programs we visited. This was *the ability to include domestic violence-related activities as “allowable” work activities*. That is, a client doing what she had agreed to do as part of her self-sufficiency plan to help herself get out of and recover from a domestic violence situation would be supported and not sanctioned. This was not the equivalent of a waiver, which could allow an extension of the 60-month federal time limit if the client reached 60 months and an extension was determined to be necessary. But hardly any clients in any of the programs visited wanted a waiver, as long as they could do what they had to do to resolve their problems with domestic violence as part of a regular TANF case.

Even with all these tools in place, worker training was essential to assure that they would be used, and used appropriately. Using them at all requires that workers feel comfortable asking the questions, getting the answers, and discussing the issues. As noted throughout chapters 2 through 7, achieving this level of comfort takes a major and ongoing effort. Further, comfort is only one of the issues to which training can contribute. Training gives workers the understanding to interpret clues and indicators, to probe carefully and understand correctly, and

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to remain non-judgmental but supportive. Training coupled with experience also gives workers the confidence to handle the minor crises of cases involving domestic violence, leaving the need to call in the domestic violence advocate or specialist for the more complex issues.

Resources for Supporting Women with Domestic Violence Issues

Many of the TANF programs we visited have created a wide variety of resources to support their clients who have domestic violence issues. These include arranging for the on-site availability of domestic violence expertise, using TANF funds for supportive services, developing smooth relationships with community partners for the provision of specialized services, providing related supportive services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, options for “what counts” as participation and cooperation, the credentials and experiences of staff, and arrangements that concentrate specialized resources on clients with particular problems (such as organization into specialized caseloads).

On-site advocates. Many of the programs we visited had made arrangements to assure expertise on domestic violence issues within their office. Most of these arrangements were contractual, in which the agency arranged with the local domestic violence service provider to hire or assign a knowledgeable staff person to work at the TANF office. Some programs developed in-house expertise by supporting caseworkers or counselors (that is, adult services staff) to become the domestic violence point person or specialized caseworker. Some places did both.

Additional approaches to service delivery include the expansion of in-house expertise, such as Denver’s Family Counseling Program and its housing coordinator positions or Anne Arundel County’s job counselors. Co-location of services is another approach, used by Anne Arundel County with respect to child support, and by El Paso County with its 90 community partners co-located in the TANF office’s building or another building directly across the parking lot.

All of the possible resources — on-site advocates, in-house expertise, using TANF funds to support an extensive service package, cooperative community partners, use of “allowable” activities, and administrative arrangements — were useful in increasing disclosure and/or helping women move forward once they had disclosed.

Creative use of TANF funds. Several of the programs we visited have created extensive arrays of supportive services paid for with TANF funds. Oregon has gone the furthest in identifying supports specifically for domestic violence situations, with its TA-DVS (Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors) program. This fund, which uses TANF dollars, is available for use with any domestic violence survivor, even if she would not qualify for TANF on the basis of income. However, both Colorado counties we visited have contracts with domestic violence providers through which they can offer counseling for women and children,

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emergency housing, civil legal assistance, and other supports in addition to the services of the on-site advocate(s). They also offer mental health, chemical dependency, and other services to reduce employment barriers, all paid for through TANF funds. In the Oregon and Colorado counties visited, as well as in Anne Arundel County and

Topeka/Shawnee County, TANF and other funds are available to pay for child care, transportation, housing-related needs, clothing — basically, whatever is required to stabilize the family and move the household head(s) toward self-sufficiency.

Cooperative relationships with community partners. A number of the programs we visited had expended considerable effort in establishing or improving their relationships with agencies in the community that could provide TANF clients with the services just described. Often these relationships involved contracts for service delivery. Cross-training and developing mutual understandings of each agency’s mission, constraints, and resources have also been important in assuring that clients get the services and supports they need. Often this has meant overcoming histories of non-communication or, worse, distrust and suspicion.

Options for “what counts.” It is of substantial benefit to TANF clients when their state or county treats activities to reduce barriers as sufficient to meet participation requirements. It means the client can receive cash and other assistance and move toward circumstances when work will be feasible, without fear of sanction. Domestic violence crises are situations in which this type of flexibility is of utmost importance.

It substantially benefits TANF clients when their state or county treats activities to reduce barriers to work as sufficient to meet participation requirements.

Staff credentials and expertise. It takes different skills to listen to people and help them plan their future than it did to follow AFDC eligibility rules to the letter. Most of the programs we visited had invested considerable training in their staff. But they also had experienced the limits, in skills, ability, and attitudes, of many of their agency’s staff. In the course of

Most of the programs we visited had invested considerable training in their staff. Training and technical assistance, together with staff turnover, may still not be sufficient to create conditions for increased disclosure in certain environments such as TANF programs in the nation’s biggest cities.

transforming themselves into TANF, these agencies often faced high staff turnover, with the related opportunity to redefine jobs and increase education and experience prerequisites. These changes were important for TANF in general in most of the programs we visited. However, many of the clients we interviewed who had domestic violence issues described how they

also have benefitted from the increased interpersonal and case management skills of the new and newly trained workers.

Having said this, it must also be acknowledged that such changes may be impossible to achieve in certain environments such as TANF programs in the nation's biggest cities. Agencies may face bureaucratic difficulties in changing job descriptions or introducing new types of positions, tight labor markets may limit the supply of people with the right skills who will take jobs in a TANF program, and entrenched attitudes of existing staff may be insurmountable. In such environments an agency wanting to create the conditions under which domestic violence issues may be identified, assessed, and addressed may need to create structures that bypass existing eligibility workers in whole or in part. One example is to send *every applicant* to a special screening and assessment team (Levin, 2000). Another approach is to make a formal screening procedure part of intake,² make referral to a special social work team mandatory if screening identifies barriers, and remember to adjust the intake workers' incentive structure so they are not penalized for processing applicants with barriers to work.

Administrative arrangements. The presence of on-site domestic violence advocates is one administrative arrangement already mentioned. Another arrangement we saw in several programs was the specialized domestic violence caseload. This was usually an "intake" caseload, in that it was comprised of women who were applying for TANF, and whose cases were being managed by a domestic violence specialist *until their domestic violence issues were settled*. Once that happened, if the women were still receiving benefits their cases were transferred to a regular caseworker for ongoing case management. Other arrangements were for the on-site advocate to share caseloads with regular caseworkers, even after the case became ongoing. El Paso County had additional specialized caseloads that allowed caseworkers to become experts in helping women with particular ongoing issues such as handicapping conditions, teen motherhood, or education/training.

ISSUES ARISING IN ACTUAL PRACTICE

Making the Change to TANF

Whether or not the transition from the AFDC program to the TANF program created the circumstances for greater ease in identifying women with domestic violence issues depends greatly on what the state or local TANF program is trying to do. If it has undergone major culture change toward the end of creating an environment supportive of clients and facilitating barrier reduction, these changes seem also to help women with domestic violence issues. If the

² This could be a single question, such as one on El Paso County's intake form, "Do you or any member of your family have any problems or circumstances that would prevent you from participating in work/training?" Or, it could be a multi-question self-administered screener that is reviewed during the intake process by someone other than the eligibility technician.

goals of the local TANF program closely resemble those of the old AFDC program, and if guarding the purse strings still outranks major assistance to clients, it will be much harder for the agency to identify women with domestic violence issues. Without disclosure, there can be little question of helping, or changing program rules to assure that participation in TANF does not increase the danger to these women.

Making the Change to Focus on Domestic Violence as a Barrier

Even in the programs that had undertaken major culture change for TANF in general, some workers were still reluctant to address domestic violence issues. Programs that did less, taking a few steps — such as doing minimal training and bringing in an on-site domestic violence advocate — but not making the necessary investment to change the orientation of most workers, had very inconsistent practice. In these offices a woman’s experience was heavily dependent on which worker she got. She could get someone supportive, but could also get someone who did not believe that domestic violence was grounds for treating someone any differently, or who pointedly refused to believe that the woman was a victim, regardless of corroborating evidence.

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Some of the programs committed to major culture change had taken steps to see that the few workers who have not bought into the new domestic violence policies did not receive these cases. Or, if the issues surfaced within their existing caseload, they were able to transfer the cases to someone more

supportive. These programs accomplished this with specialized intake caseloads for domestic violence, or with joint case management or transfer of cases in existing caseloads.

However, the programs without particular emphasis on barrier reduction were not set up to monitor the behavior of different caseworkers. They did not bring pressure to bear on those who did not want to attend to domestic violence issues, and they had not set up any compensatory mechanisms to assure that women with domestic violence issues find themselves working with sympathetic staff. More staff in these offices were still operating on the basis of fears of false disclosure (“clients trying to put something over on the system”) rather than on the basis of an interest in supporting women, or even in reducing the possibility of endangering them.

These offices had rules about what was supposed to happen, but in fact the decision of whether to inquire about domestic violence at all, and the time devoted to discovering domestic violence issues, was left up to individual caseworkers, as was the level of documentation needed to corroborate domestic violence. Clearly these offices were less likely to identify women with domestic violence issues, and less likely to help them if they did. It seems important for agencies to set up a feedback mechanism to help them identify staff who do and do not work well with clients involved in domestic violence situations. They can then either work more on training and

technical assistance or pursue other mechanisms to assure that clients get what they need and what they deserve under federal FVO guidelines.

Worker incentive structures. The incentive structures faced by TANF caseworkers can sometimes work against the likelihood of discovering and addressing domestic violence. Evaluating and rewarding TANF workers on the basis of the work participation rate achieved in their caseload is a major form of disincentive that had a strong influence in one of the sites we

Programs that are serious about helping women reduce barriers to work should examine their workers' incentive structures, to be sure they do not have a situation that pits one program goal (high participation rates) against another (not endangering women), and rewards workers for achieving one but not the other.

visited and played a noticeable role in at least one other site. The disincentive is particularly strong if the participation rate is calculated only on the basis of "countable" activities rather than a combination of "countable" and "allowable" activities (assuming the program *has* any allowable activities that are not countable). With this reward structure, every time a caseworker takes the time even to identify barriers to work, let alone allowing the client to pursue activities that may help remove a barrier but are not "countable" (such as addressing domestic violence issues rather than working or looking for work), the case counts against the worker's participation rate. Programs that are serious about helping women reduce barriers to work will want to re-examine their workers' incentive structures, to be sure they have not set up a situation that pits one program goal (high participation rates) against another (not endangering women), rewards workers for achieving one but not the other, and leaves it up to the workers to decide what to do. For the average worker to act on the premise that the goal of not endangering women is important, their incentives need to be structured toward this end, *and* agency leadership needs to strongly support the goal of helping clients.

On-site domestic violence advocates. Many of the programs we visited had on-site domestic violence advocates under contract from a local domestic violence service agency, and have found they work well. However, other programs have had mixed experiences with on-site advocates, and in some of the earliest TANF demonstration projects the on-site advocates were either very frustrated, very ignored, or both. It is important to think through the circumstances under which on-site advocates will enhance the TANF program, and the steps that agency management can take to assure the maximum benefit to the agency and its clients from these arrangements.

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In the early demonstration programs employing on-site advocates, the assumption was made that a little staff training plus the availability of the advocate would assure that TANF staff would begin identifying women with domestic violence issues and referring them to the advocates. This rarely happened,

in fact. In some of these programs the advocates began going into the rooms where TANF applicants were waiting to be seen and doing their own, informal, group sessions and “recruitment” campaigns. These activities did increase the number of women who disclosed domestic violence issues, but for the most part did not change the basic orientation of the TANF offices. One demonstration site, Options/Opciones in Chicago (Levin, 2000), found that to give women a reasonable opportunity to disclose domestic violence and get help to address it, they had to bypass the regular intake workers entirely. They changed the entire intake structure to send *all applicants* to be screened by specially trained personnel after they had been through the regular intake process for cash assistance.

Based on reports of these early experiences, and on the variations we observed during our own site visits, we would conclude the following. On-site domestic violence advocates, or TANF staff given the job of specializing in helping women with domestic violence issues, will be most effective if:

- They are operating in an environment focused on barrier reduction;
- They have the full support of agency leadership;
- If TANF staff, they have received adequate training and technical assistance related to domestic violence;
- Training for TANF staff is provided by the on-site domestic violence advocates, at least in part, to let TANF staff get to know and trust the advocate(s) and establish a habit of interacting with them;
- The domestic violence advocates spend significant portions of their day and week at the TANF agency (preferably full time at a big agency);
- The roles and responsibilities of the on-site domestic violence advocates with respect to TANF staff have been carefully specified and discussed with all parties;
- The on-site domestic violence advocates are integrated into the activities of TANF staff, attending staff meetings, retreats, trainings, etc., and have the full support of TANF administrators; and
- Care is taken that the on-site domestic violence advocates maintain good working relationships with the domestic violence service agency and its staff, so they do not end up feeling isolated from their own colleagues.

Integrating child support into the TANF process. The programs with major culture change had also gone the farthest in their integration of child support enforcement with the TANF application process. In some places (for example, Anne Arundel County), the first person an applicant sees is the child support worker. In others (the Oregon and Colorado sites), a child support worker is always part of the intake process. Any information about domestic violence obtained by a TANF intake worker is passed on to the child support worker, and vice versa. In some programs the TANF worker has to sign off on the findings of the

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child support worker with respect to domestic violence, assuring joint knowledge between the two programs. Child support enforcement is less integrated into the TANF process in the programs that have made less of a shift toward barrier reduction and a focus on long-term self-sufficiency.

Confidentiality, Privacy, Non-Disclosure

Programs focused on helping women overcome barriers to work, including domestic violence, will need to resolve important issues about who knows or does not know what about whom, when, and how. An on-site advocate who is under contract to a domestic violence service agency will be covered by the confidentiality strictures of that agency. To the extent that a state “privileges” this communication, a woman could tell this advocate a lot of information that the advocate is obliged to keep confidential from TANF caseworkers unless the woman gives her permission to share it. The same restrictions on flow of information probably do not apply to a domestic violence point person or specialist who is a TANF program employee. There are very good reasons for privileging the information disclosed by a woman facing a domestic violence situation, and giving her control over the amount of information she wants generally known by the agency. Such protection of confidentiality need not compromise the ability of either the on-site advocate or any TANF caseworker to develop an appropriate self-sufficiency plan. However, the lines of communication and privacy need to be drawn clearly and carefully, understood by all, supported by the administration, and communicated directly to staff. Likewise the roles of the different actors (advocates and TANF staff) need to be clearly defined, separately and in relation to each other. Otherwise the chances increase that people will feel betrayed, and betrayal is not a good basis for ongoing interactions that require trust.

In the child support context, Colorado assesses a client’s eligibility for a good cause exemption based on domestic violence concerns. However, granting a good cause exemption also means that the client, who is the custodial parent, does not get the income that child support might be able to provide. Colorado therefore developed an “in-between” remedy that they call “non-disclosure.” The idea is that the state will pursue and the custodial parent will receive child support, but the state will hold confidential any information about the woman’s whereabouts that could endanger her should her abuser learn of it. This sounds like an interesting solution to an important issue. We heard of similar procedures developed by a specialized child support worker in Douglas County, Oregon. However, it is also important not to promise non-disclosure if the promise cannot be kept. Even the child support enforcement staff in El Paso County worry about their ability to keep their commitment to confidentiality once a case goes to court and a public judgment is entered into the legal record.

IMPLICATIONS

One of this project's central purposes was to identify promising approaches being used by state and county TANF and child support enforcement programs to assure that program requirements do not create or increase danger to people in domestic violence situations. We found the most promising approaches to be those integrated into a general culture change aimed at moving welfare offices toward promoting long-term self-sufficiency among their clients. However, since most TANF programs have not made this type of culture change, we also examined approaches that have some promise in more average TANF environments. These included on-site domestic violence advocates, designating activities addressing domestic violence as "allowable" work activities, and creating a screening and assessment structure that largely bypasses the eligibility determination process. As with other aspects of promising approaches, the function of formal FVO waivers varied considerably by the type of program operating in a jurisdiction.

The FVO in the TANF Programs We Visited

The remedies offered by federal statute and regulations — the FVO waiver and the good cause child support exemption — were not used much in the counties we visited. Most had developed an approach they felt to be more productive, and one less consuming of agency resources. The general approach, with variations in each site, combined (1) an expanded array of activities allowable within a client's self-sufficiency plan, and (2) caseworker flexibility to make these decisions rather than requiring a formal waiver application to cover the things a woman can accomplish within the time frame of a two- to four-week waiver.

The FVO in Other TANF Programs

Some states have set up complex and formal procedures through which clients may request a waiver of various program requirements under a state's FVO. These procedures may exist side by side with more flexible approaches to handling domestic violence situations, as they do in Colorado. Or, they may be the major route through which TANF clients may seek relief if they feel that program requirements place them in danger. Massachusetts, for instance, which had one of the federal demonstration grants to implement the FVO, is one of these. We understand from presentations at conferences that TANF programs set up with very formal waiver processes, such as the one in Massachusetts, process relatively few waivers, virtually all of which are for quite short periods of time. Nevertheless, the option of applying for and granting a waiver may be critically important for the relatively few TANF clients whose domestic violence-related issues cannot be settled quickly. If a domestic violence survivor or her children needed to participate in counseling or therapy for an extended period of time, or needed time to recover from injuries over a period of months, a formal waiver might protect her from running out of cash assistance benefits at the end of the federal or state-imposed time limit on benefit receipt.

Other Functions of the FVO

The Family Violence Amendment has caused each state to examine its current practice with respect to the treatment of domestic violence survivors who apply for or are recipients of TANF. Further, each state has had to make a conscious, legislative decision about whether or not to adopt the FVO. The need to do so has raised the issue of domestic violence and remedies for it to a level of political debate and consideration that it might not have achieved in many communities in this country without the stimulus of federal legislation.

An additional benefit of the FVO is the leverage it gives legal advocates when a person with significant barriers to work due to domestic violence is being pressured by a TANF program to fulfill stringent work requirements or face a sanction. Cases exist in which legal advocates have been able to secure waivers for their clients when the state allowed them but a local TANF office was not operating in the spirit of the state's FVO legislation.

Finally, as noted earlier in this chapter, formal state adoption of the FVO gives states a certain amount of flexibility with regard to federal TANF regulations. With a formal FVO in place, a state may be able to obtain relief from potential federal penalties for failure to meet work participation rates, or be allowed to carry more than 20 percent of its caseload past the 60-month federal lifetime limit without penalty.

Good Cause Exemptions for Child Support

With respect to good cause exemption from cooperating with child support enforcement, there is even stronger evidence that additional or expanded remedies would be desirable. The results of several studies (Pearson, Thoennes, and Griswold, 1999; Pearson and Griswold, 1997) indicate that the vast majority of women *want* the income from child support and, further, they *want the man to pay*. What they fear is that he will find them, and that they or their children will suffer harm as a result. An appropriate remedy would assure that the woman's whereabouts would be protected, but that the state would pursue child support. This seems hard to accomplish, as discussed in chapter 7, because of court procedures and the public nature of the information in court orders.

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