

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## HEARINGS BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

H.R. 7927 and H.R. 8948

TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
AND WELFARE TO ESTABLISH A GRANT PROGRAM TO DE-  
VELOP METHODS OF PREVENTION AND TREATMENT RELAT-  
ING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

HEARINGS HELD IN WASHINGTON, D.C.,  
ON MARCH 16 AND 17, 1978

use of the Committee on Education and Labor  
CARL D. PERKINS, *Chairman*



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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

STATEMENT

BY

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COMMISSIONER

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES  
OFFICE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BEFORE THE

*House*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1978

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Blandina Cardenas. I am the Commissioner for Children, Youth and Families in the Office of Human Development Services. Dr. Gerald Klerman, the Administrator of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration and I are pleased to appear before you today.

Dr. Klerman and I are particularly grateful for the opportunity to discuss with you the great concern we share over the problem of domestic violence. We would like to use our appearance this morning to inform you about current activities in the Department concerning domestic violence and to learn from you and the other witnesses more about special concerns of people affected by this problem.

Under the leadership of Secretary Califano, representatives from various agencies throughout the Department have recently begun meeting to discuss the extent of our knowledge in this area, what we see as a proper Federal role, and where we are headed. We have learned that spousal violence occurs in epidemic proportions. Dr. Klerman will discuss in greater detail those findings based on research funded by ADAMHA.

We recognize that violence between spouses may and often does occur separately from other forms of violence.

We have also found that violence between spouses cannot be treated in isolation from other violence within the family. We have learned that men who abuse their children also frequently abuse their wives, and that there are many forms of violence within the family -- violence against aged family members, violence among adolescent siblings, incest, and parental violence against youth which may cause youth to run away.

As you know, the President, the Secretary and all of us in HEW have a strong commitment to strengthening families. It is in the context of the family that we look at the problem of domestic violence. Thus, while we are appalled by the extent of violence between spouses, we are trying to prevent and treat all forms of domestic violence-- we think that the root of the problem lies within the total family as a unit. There is a continuum of need faced by families

Let us describe for you briefly some of the activities and actions we have recently taken or are planning to meet the problem of domestic violence. Our actions can be grouped by the categories of Federal funds for shelters and services, research and demonstration activities, information clearinghouse and incidence.

This Committee has provided the leadership in the area of child abuse and neglect. Because of your work in this area, for the past three years, - under the authority of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, we have been conducting a number of demonstration projects of the delivery of services to abused or neglected children and their families.

As an unforeseen component of their family oriented services to abused and neglected children, all of our 20 child abuse Demonstration Treatment Centers provide some services which either directly or indirectly assist abused spouses. For example:

- o The San Diego project amended its intake policy eight months ago to accept referrals of abused spouses in families with small children. It did so because staff had found that there was a significant incidence of children being hurt "accidentally" in situations when the spouse was the target of the assault. In addition, the project had discovered a clear pattern of childhood histories involving intra-familial violence in cases of spouse abuse, as well as battering. That is, they found that the perpetrator or the victim had experienced violence either as a victim or as a witness during childhood. I should mention that in taking family histories, the project found the same patterns in spouse cases that we find in classical battered child cases, that is: isolation, situational stress, childhood histories of abuse, and poor impulse control. This project has come to the conclusion that, in many cases of family violence, the victim is whichever family member happens to be available.

- o The Honolulu project has established an emergency shelter which is used exclusively to provide safe lodging to abused spouses and their children. A high percentage of the people served by this refuge are from military families. The objectives of the project are: (1) to provide spouses with children a safe respite on a temporary basis until the conflict between the parents can be resolved; (2) to assist families through periods of crisis with coordinated social services, and (3) to help women in their efforts to develop independent living situations or, when they desire it, to help women return to their husbands. In 1977, the project provided room and board and information and referral assistance to over 200 families. Families usually stay for a few days to as long as two weeks. During this time, the shelter provides assistance in obtaining medical services, food, clothing, financial assistance (if needed), and permanent shelter (if desired). Eligibility to enter the shelter is not restricted by income or marital status.
  
- o The project in Toppenish, Washington, operated by the Yakima Indian Nation, also provides emergency shelter to abused spouses and works with families to reduce the incidence of abuse. Located in a large turn-of-the-century house, the project provides nursery/day/care/emergency shelter facilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week for tribal members who need help. Wives frequently bring their children in the middle of the night seeking temporary shelter while tempers

were cooled and issues are resolved. Thus, the project has provided a haven from further family conflict, where the wife and children can be relieved of an atmosphere of fear and can be protected.

Parents Anonymous, a national organization which assists in the development of local self-help groups for parents who abuse their children or those at risk, receives a grant from ACYF, and reports that in almost every one its over 750 chapters there are mothers who are victims of spouse abuse. (Similar to the other treatment projects, Parents Anonymous reports that in some instances child abuse is a matter of physical proximity, that is, that the child receives the abuse that was intended for the spouse.)

A number of chapters are attempting to deal with the special issues of spouse abuse by holding separate weekend meetings for battered spouses, in addition to regular chapter meetings. Many mothers in these groups are concerned about the traumatic effects on children of witnessing assaults and other abusive behavior between parents. They recognize that many children experience guilt for the spouse abuse, feeling somehow responsible for it. They also recognize that spouse abuse creates a bad role model for children; they sense that some boys develop patters of violence toward females and that some girls develop an expectation of attack and exploitation by males, thus hurting their chances for healthy relations with members of the opposite sex in adult years. As a result of numerous request, the national office of Parents Anonymous is now considering the development of specific self-help programs for the victims of spouse abuse.

- o The Philadelphia Project provides psychiatric counseling to abused spouses and integrates its efforts with the Women-In-Transition Center, a local program designed especially for abused spouses.
- o Two Chicago projects coordinate community services such as legal aid to the abused spouse, couple counseling when appropriate, and emergency shelter (utilizing the Salvation Army) when needed.
- o Moreover, a number of other child abuse projects, although they do not have an inhouse capability to provide emergency shelter, arrange for families to be accepted by such shelters and often provide transportation to them.

These initial small scale demonstration efforts are showing that successful prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect require that services must be available to all members of the family unit in need of help and protection. Besides emergency shelters for abused spouses which, like the provision of emergency protection for children, must be a first priority, all the child abuse demonstration projects report that one of their most successful interventions in cases of both spouse abuse and child maltreatment is in the area of improved family relations. Some examples of the services provided in these situations are: individual and adult counseling, couple/family counseling, group counseling/therapy, marital counseling, parent aid/lay therapy, Parents Anonymous participation,

education services, homemaker services, transportation support, short-term foster care, medical services, day care, babysitting, and a whole range of legal and "advocacy" services for employment, housing, and other concrete needs.

We supported the development and dissemination of a design for a 24 hour Comprehensive Emergency Services (CES) Program in Nashville, Tennessee. The project enabled children and families to remain in their homes in most cases rather than move to shelters. In some cases, it provided shelter in emergency situations for children. These children often were accompanied by their mothers, who in a number of instances had also been battered. A twenty-four hour hotline and counseling services were the key vehicles in this successful program. The project brought about active co-ordination and mutual referral of cases among a wide variety of service providers, including the police, social services, courts, and health authorities.

The Children's Bureau also contracted to have the Nashville design explained to states, cities, and counties across the country. Technical assistance was provided to help replicate the Nashville design. Though the project was not aimed primarily at helping battered spouses, similar projects could be designed for that purpose. We have proposed, for FY 1979, over \$1 million in seed money be provided for grants to 35 state and local governments to develop such programs.

The Administration on Aging has been conducting research and demonstrations aimed at preventing victimization or criminal violence against the aged. Jointly with the Community Services Administration, HUD, and the Law Enforcement Assistant Administration, AoA has funded research projects and four demonstration projects. A handbook has been developed and disseminated advising the elderly how to avoid criminal violence.

State social services programs, under titles IV-B and XX of the Social Security Act, provide funds that may be used for service to combat the problems of domestic violence. Title IV-B provides protective and supportive services for children and their families with no income test. Title XX permits States to provide services for abused, neglected or exploited children or adults with no income test. However, title XX currently limits shelter care to emergency care of children in danger of abuse or neglect.

We recognize need for funding authority for shelter care for battered adults as well as children. We therefore will be proposing to the Congress language to amend title to allow States to use the funds for emergency shelter for a limited time period as a protective service to an adult in danger of physical or mental injury, neglect, maltreatment, or exploitation.

Mr. Chairman, you and your staff have clearly spent a great deal of time and attention in seeking a way to maximize current efforts by many community organizations and the capabilities and responsibilities of State agencies. And so have the other Members who have developed legislation

in this area. We too want to applaud the devotion and hours of volunteer work and contributions of the many professional and grass roots groups that are out there, on the firing line, providing shelter to women and men who have been battered.

We too wish to build on these current efforts, to build on the capabilities of State agencies , to increase our knowledge, so that more effective steps can be taken to prevent and treat domestic violence, and to improve State laws and procedures for combatting domestic violence.

At the same time, we seek to avoid further fragmentation of problems among members of the family and of a further fragmented Federal approach. We are now taking a Department-wide, in-depth look, at our current activities. This hearing seems to us to be an important step toward developing a co-ordinated approach. We are exploring options for future action and would like to work with you, Mr. Chairman, the Members of the Subcommittee and staff, toward developing these options.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to testify. Dr. Klerman and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.