

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, 1978

HEARINGS  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
CHILD AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION  
ON  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND LEGISLATION WITH RESPECT TO  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

LOS ANGELES, CALIF.  
MARCH 4, 1978  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
MARCH 8, 1978

Printed for the use of the Committee on Human Resources

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, INC.

1425 H St., N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005 (202) 628-6800

TESTIMONY

BEFORE THE SENATE

SUBCOMM. ON CHILD AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

PRESENTED BY: ELIZABETH DAVOREN,  
Tiburon, California

on behalf of the

National Association of  
Social Workers

Washington, D.C.

March 8, 1978

My name is Elizabeth Davoren of Tiburon, California. Presently, I am a consultant for a DHEW funded project on the development of a national curriculum for training professional disciplines in identification, reporting and referral of child abuse and neglect.

Today, I welcome the opportunity to present the views of the 77,000 members of the National Association of Social Workers and its National Committee On Women's Issues.

The issue of violence within the family must be viewed in the context of societal attitudes which allow the use of violence as a means for settling differences. Although today we do not intend to address the larger issue of violence in our society, it is important to note that violent behavior is encouraged in the media and popular forms of entertainment.

Taking cognizance of the above, I would like to address the specific area of domestic violence and recommend a number of ideas for developing a national program for domestic violence, prevention and treatment.

#### Statement of the Problem

This legislation is an outgrowth of initial proposals directed primarily at assisting local community groups working with the battered spouse programs. Fortunately during the early stages of development of various proposals there was a recognition of the need to begin to attack other forms of violence within the family's perspective. We applaud this larger perspective.

Until recently, there has been little specific data available on the amount of physical violence that occurs within the family. As child abuse became a recognized problem, communities began to become aware of other forms of violence within the family, most notably the battered spouse syndrome. New studies in this expanding field now point to another phenomena - sibling abuse. The research and statistics are enabling us to appreciate the scope of the problem. For example,

- 2 -

- 100,000 cases of child abuse reported annually;
- approximately 25% of all murders in the U.S.A. occur within the family; and,
- a University of New Hampshire study showed that 62% of a sample of high school seniors had used physical force on a brother or sister.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from all this is that significant amounts of violence originate in the family. We now believe that this violence is not just injurious to the individuals involved but to the community at large. There is growing evidence that violent behavior patterns are learned in the home. Those people who participate in family violence behavior are not necessarily mentally ill. We agree with Congressman Newton Steers (R-Maryland) that family violence is a treatable social illness. What is needed now are resources to the community and social agencies to cope with the expanding dimensions of the problem and intensive, basic research into the causative components of the issue.

Our recommendations are based on encouragement and commitment to the development of an integrated system of services by trained persons, professionals and volunteers.

1. In order to avoid fragmentation of another social service program, we suggest that the proper location for the new program be within the newly re-organized Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF).

ACYF has recently been organized to broaden the scope of its activities to an emphasis on families. The Task Force on Families of ACYF which reports directly to the Commissioner has just concluded a study that recommends policy and programs in the area of family services. In addition, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCAN) is located in the Children's Bureau within ACYF. When we consider that local battered spouse program experience is matching data that certain types of violence - spouse abuse and child abuse - are closely interrelated

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it is easy to see the need for close coordination with NCAN. This opportunity will also enable us to build on NCAN's experience in programming and research.

This approach would reinforce the Secretary of HEW Califano's focus on the family and in a small but significant way would serve as a prelude to the White House Conference on Families. We feel strongly that the concerns of children and families should be coordinated under one roof and within an Administration where there would be a high level of visibility.

Other agencies which have been mentioned, National Institute of Mental Health and ACTION, do not offer these advantages. NIMH's research orientation and strong mental health emphasis are not easily transferrable to programs which have originated in the local voluntary sector. Moreover, NIMH does not have the strong linkages to the public welfare system which ACYF has.

Although ACTION provides the network of volunteers it does not offer the service delivery system linkages to the family. The federal government should also be careful about initiating programs that do not provide continuity of personnel. Voluntary programs, even when they use local service mechanisms tend to not provide that needed continuity. This is not to undermine the value of volunteers, but to underscore the need for programs which can be firmly grounded on a long term basis at the community level. In sum, we believe that ACYF is the only appropriate agency for locating a program on domestic violence prevention and treatment.

2. A program directed at prevention and treatment of family violence can be a first step in the development of an integrated support system for families in crisis.

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We foresee that a vast array of agencies and supportive services will have to be mobilized to effectively handle crisis situations involving violence in the family. Consequently, some attention and monies should be directed at establishing and encouraging the development of these service linkages. Even though it is often unrecorded, the need for community resources to cope with the problems of family violence is one which must be met. These families require an integrated support system which is currently non-existent at every level of government. For now, it may be necessary to develop special programs to deal with the problem of the battered spouse, in a manner similar to the way we handle child abuse. However, like so many areas of victim services, all aspects of the problem must be dealt with. For example, local shelter and emergency services for women are frequently a response to an immediate crisis. Their services must be broadened within the context of established public agencies and coordinated with existing resources. We suggest that grants to local programs be conditioned upon incorporation of a plan for integrating a range of services presently available within the community and identifying those service components which are not available.

3. There is a role for trained volunteers and there is a role for professional staff.

We want to continue and encourage voluntary efforts and self help programs at the local level. Much voluntary efforts to date in spouse abuse centers have focused on shelters and 24-hour telephone intake. The more comprehensive programs usually involve the public welfare system and its range of services. Local community efforts, private agencies and self help groups frequently are better and more efficient and non-stigmatizing gateways into the established helping system. These local efforts promote legitimate ways for people to seek help for embarrassing

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problems without the need to identify themselves as a client of a public agency. In addition, local voluntary efforts are extremely important and useful because they provide extended services which could not otherwise be provided by paid staff, minimize overhead costs, sometimes provide one to one interaction on a continuous basis, and offer vitality and enthusiasm to enable low-cost programs to operate. These efforts must be encouraged.

We also believe that programs directed at violence in the family take enormous patience and time for results to be realized. Because of the nature of the problem, there is a need for professional tolerance. Services such as family therapy and constructive crisis intervention call for trained personnel and must be coordinated as part of the established service system. We would recommend that training funds be available for lay volunteers from the community and for professionals to handle this sensitive area of human behavior. This should not necessarily require separate professional staff but could be implemented by utilizing existing trained professional staff.

4. Research should be directed not only at discovering the underlying causes of family violence but should include a systematic series of demonstration grants to uncover the best delivery system for services.

Everyone recognizes the need for data and research which enhances our knowledge base. Research should include studies on preventative measures, impact analysis of other federal programs on spouse abuse, and precipitating crises. In addition, demonstration projects should be required to have an evaluation plan to measure long range effects. We feel strongly that the first year of operation should have as a major thrust, development of an evaluation plan prior to funding numerous projects.

Research should test realistic strategy that is likely to be supported by additional federal funds. There is no value in funding a large number of idealized programs which are unlikely to be continued, supported or replicated because funding

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will be unavailable in subsequent fiscal year cycles. In this regard, Congresswoman Barbara Milkulski's approach to using ACTION as a training mechanism for community volunteers deserves to be tested as a demonstration project. The vitality which VISTA has shown in local communities can be added to other local efforts on family violence. Perhaps, clearly defined research goals and demonstration projects will act as a spur to others to conduct related work in this area.

In sum, we support a legislative concept which houses this new federal effort within a government department that already has established links with other related federal efforts, encourages a cooperative relationship between professionals and community volunteers, and which can propose systematic investigation into the research and services components needed at both the national and local levels.

Thank you.

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS  
Wednesday, March 8, 1978  
Before the Subcommittee on Child and Human Development

NASW is the largest professional social work organization in the world representing 77,000 social workers nationwide.

Statement of the Problem

Until recently, there has been little specific data available on the amount of physical violence that occurs within the family. As child abuse became a recognized problem, communities began to become aware of other forms of violence within the family, most notably the battered spouse syndrome. New studies in this expanding field now point to another phenomena - sibling abuse. The research and statistics are enabling us to appreciate the scope of the problem. For example,

- 4 million cases of child abuse reported annually;
- approximately 25% of all murders in the U.S.A. occur within the family; and,
- a University of New Hampshire study showed that 62% of a sample of high school seniors had used physical force on a brother or sister.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from all this is that significant amounts of violence originate in the family. We now believe that this violence is not just injurious to the individuals involved but to the community at large. There is growing evidence that violent behavior patterns are learned in the home. Those people who participate in family violence behavior are not necessarily mentally ill. We agree with Congressman Newton Steers (R-Md.) that family violence is a treatable social ill. What is needed now are resources to the community and social agencies to cope with the expanding dimensions of the problem and intensive, basic research into the causative components of the problem.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are based on encouragement and commitment to the development of an integrated system of services by trained persons, professionals and volunteers.

1. Location of Family Violence Prevention and Treatment Program.  
In order to avoid fragmentation of another social program, we suggest that the proper location for the new program be within the newly reorganized Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF). There are more than a few reasons for preferring ACYF.



- ACYF has recently been organized to broaden the scope of activities to a general concern for families. There is no other federal agency where the concerns of children and families can be coordinated under one roof.

- Local program experience is matching data that certain types of violence - spouse abuse and child abuse - are closely intrrelated. Like so many areas of victim services, the overlaps in abuse characteristics are just being recognized. Because the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) is located within ACYF, this offers an opportunity to not only build on experience but to coordinate programming and research.

- The Federal government should be careful about initiating programs which do not provide for continuity of personnel. Voluntary programs and service mechanisms tend to not provide that needed continuity.

#### 2. The need for an integrated support system.

While it may be necessary to develop special programs to deal with the problem of spouse battering. We foresee that a vast array of agencies will have to be mobilized to effectively handle crisis situations of vulnerable families. Consequently, some attention and monies should be directed at establishing and encouraging the development of these service linkages.

#### 3. The role of volunteers.

We want to continue and encourage voluntary efforts at the local level and self-help programs. There is a role for trained volunteers and there is a role for professional help. Much voluntary efforts to date in spouse abuse centers has focused on shelters and 24-hour phone intake. We believe that family therapy and constructive crisis intervention calls for trained personnel. We would recommend that training funds be available for both lay volunteers from the community and for professionals to learn how to handle this sensitive area of human behavior.

#### 4. Research.

Finally, everyone recognizes the need for data and research which enhances our knowledge base. We believe that a clearly defined focal point within the federal government will act as a spur to much needed research into this area.

In sum, we support a legislative concept which houses this new federal effort within a government department that already has established links with other related Federal efforts, encourages a cooperative relationship between professionals and community volunteers, and which can propose systematic investigation into the research and services components needed at both the national and local levels.

Senator CRANSTON. Ms. Determan.

Ms. DETERMAN. I am Sara-Ann Determan and am speaking today on behalf of the American Bar Association, which represents more than half the Nation's lawyers.

In February 1978, the ABA House of Delegates, by an overwhelming vote, adopted the following resolution on the subject of family violence.

*Be it resolved*, That the American Bar Association supports Federal, State, and local efforts to combat the incidence, causes, and effects of family violence and supports the implementation of programs to protect the victims of family violence.

The association has studied the problem and believes that it is an extremely serious problem that broadly affects the American family of all races and economic classes.

The Nation's lawyers think that Federal legislation is needed to establish a priority for combating family violence, and to implement a national strategy involving coordination of existing programs and research looking toward the initiation of new programs and efforts in that area.

We believe that the victims of family violence are usually unable to protect themselves because of their economic and psychological dependence on their abusers. They are unable to alter, themselves, this pattern of family violence. Because of this, it is imperative that the community, through its government, take special action to combat the crime of woman battering.

As you know, the number of persons affected by domestic violence is staggering.

The ABA believes that family violence is an extremely serious national problem and urges Congress to take action in this area.

On behalf of the association, I thank the chairman for his leadership in this area and for permitting us to put these views on record.

We look forward to reviewing the proposed legislation.

Senator CRANSTON. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Determan follows:]

**END**