

BUILDING COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Increasing Economic Opportunity for Battered Women National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

April 2005

Volume 6 Number 1

BCS *Connecting to Build Comprehensive Solutions Institute* convenes Tampa Seminar. Fifteen state teams met in Tampa, Florida, November 10-12, 2004 to kick off the BCS *Connecting to Build Comprehensive Solutions Institute*. Teams were nominated for the *Connecting Institute* by their State Domestic Violence Coalitions and came from the District of Columbia, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The *Connecting Institute* is designed to work with state teams to strengthen advocacy skills, provide opportunities to learn from other advocates, and build leadership that will increase capacity to meet battered women's needs. Beyond the Tampa Seminar, teams involved in the *Connecting Institute* will receive information and assistance from BCS staff and consultants and will reconvene at a follow-up seminar scheduled for July 20-21, 2005.

As you'll see in this newsletter, the Tampa Seminar brought together dynamic teams of advocates already engaged in building more comprehensive options for battered women. After 3 days of thoughtful discussions, learning, and planning we look forward to working with the teams as their creative efforts continue to unfold.

-- Jill Davies, BCS Project Director & Bonnie Fowler, NRCDV Director

BCS CONNECTING INSTITUTE SEMINAR OVERVIEW

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The BCS *Connecting Institute* Tampa Seminar provided 15 state teams with opportunities to frame new approaches to advocacy, network, refine advanced advocacy skills, and develop state team plans. Jill Davies, Sujata Warrior and Day Piercy facilitated the activities and training.

The 60-plus participants opened the Seminar by sharing what events first connected them or brought them to a *Building Comprehensive Solutions* (BCS) approach. Teams also used creative art materials to explore their state visions of BCS. The teams then focused on framing the work they would pursue in the following areas: (1) outreach to underserved populations; (2) collaboration; and (3) public policy or systemic issues.

Teams took part in an exercise that provided participants the opportunity to experience what a "comprehensive" and "non-comprehensive" approach might be like for a battered woman. This session led to a lively discussion about the experiences women face when they turn to domestic violence agencies and other systems for advocacy and assistance.

The following session then introduced a definition of *Comprehensive Solutions* as:

- **Visions, policies and practices that respond to the current realities facing battered women and their families, especially those living in poverty**
- **Effective collaboration, and**
- **A woman-defined advocacy approach that respectfully connects women from different cultures and**

experiences to resources relevant to their needs.

Other highlights from the Seminar:

- Advanced advocacy sessions focused on refining some of the skills necessary to build comprehensive solutions, including outreach to underserved communities, strategic collaboration, and policy advocacy and analysis.
- The Women of Color Network invited women of color to participate in a facilitated discussion led by Tonya Lovelace.
- Policy principles and implementation strategies outlined in BCS Publication #15: “Policy Blueprint on DV and Poverty” were explored.

State teams met to discuss strategies and concrete action plans for their local/state work. The action plans involve an impressive array of emerging work including: (1) domestic violence/sexual assault collaboration around mental health issues; (2) a women with disabilities focus group; (3) housing gap determinations and analysis; (4) production of a battered immigrant women protocol; (5) application of self-assessment tools from the *BCS curriculum* on outreach to underserved communities; (6) advocacy training on jobs and employment; (7) collaboration with a coalition addressing predatory lending; (8) training on childcare as a small business, and; (9) the provision of financial education options and individual development accounts (IDAs) for battered women.

LESSONS LEARNED:

1) Groundbreaking comprehensive solutions advocacy is underway.

Teams came from states in which advocates are already engaged in expanding advocacy and options for battered women. A few examples include: Integrating economic advocacy and community organizing with immigrant communities; training for shelter staff on housing and other economic issues; partnering to meet the needs of battered women facing barriers to employment; engaging men in the work to end violence against women; and improving advocacy with women experiencing mental health, trauma, and substance abuse issues.

2) Ongoing capacity building is crucial to building a comprehensive solutions advocacy approach.

Jill Davies describes BCS in this way, “In practice, building comprehensive solutions to domestic violence means that women from different cultures, women with financial needs (a living wage job, housing, income, child care, education, health care), women with children affected by domestic violence, women with parenting issues, and women experiencing chemical dependency or mental health issues, will all find respectful and relevant advocacy and resources.” Engaging in this BCS approach means continual skill-building and learning across wide-ranging issues and substantive areas.

--Andrea C. Farney, NRCDV Policy Analyst

The following BCS publications were specifically relevant to the Tampa Institute Seminar:

Publication #15: Policy Blueprint on Domestic Violence and Poverty, by Jill Davies

BCSDV Training Curricula: *Introduction to Policy Advocacy and Analysis* by Jill Davies; *Outreach to Underserved Communities* by Sujata Warriar; and *Skills for Successful Collaborations* by Day Piercy

These documents are available on the Internet at www.vawnet.org or www.nrcdv.org and also by calling the NRCDV at 800-537-2238.

Building Comprehensive Solutions to Domestic Violence is an ongoing initiative to help domestic violence organizations collaborate more effectively in their communities and build visions, policies, and practices that respond to the current realities facing battered women and their families, especially those living in poverty. The BCS Newsletter serves as a forum for sharing economic advocacy-related projects involving domestic violence programs. Let us know what you think of this newsletter. We want to hear from you. Send an email to acf@pcadv.org or call 1-800-537-2238 and ask for Andrea Farney, BCS Newsletter Editor.