

BUILDING COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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

September 2005

Volume 6 Number 2

BCS Connecting to Build Comprehensive Solutions Institute. All fifteen *Connecting Institute* state teams reconvened in Baltimore, MD from July 20-21 to continue the work begun at last November's Seminar in Tampa. Peer-to-peer structured sessions emphasized strategic thinking and action in moving towards comprehensive solutions advocacy. We're excited about the energy and drive of the teams as they move forward!

Staffing Updates. As you may know, **Bonnie Fowler retired** from her position as NRCDV Director at the end of June. Bonnie strongly supported and believed in BCS. Her kind presence and dedication will be missed. In August, **Anne Menard rejoined** the NRCDV as Director. Anne brings significant skills and experience to the position - including being one of the founders of BCS. We welcome Anne back and look forward to working with her more closely once again!

In this issue of the BCS newsletter we profile the vanguard efforts of the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence as they respond to the economic-related needs faced by battered women and their children.

-- Jill Davies, BCS Project Director

EXPANDING ECONOMIC ADVOCACY BEYOND WELFARE: HIGHLIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE WASHINGTON STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE *Contact: Ilene Stohl, Program Specialist, (360) 586-1022, ext. 102 or ilene@wscadv.org*

What DOES money have to do with battered women's safety? What SHOULD domestic violence advocates do about it? These are not idle questions to staff of the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV). Building on their groundbreaking welfare advocacy in the late 1990s, the WSCADV is integrating battered women's financial issues throughout all its projects, spearheaded by *The Economic Justice Project*.

The Economic Justice Project promotes safe access to public benefits, child support collection, affordable housing, employment and job training, education, and healthcare. **The overarching goal is to remove the economic barriers that stand in the way of battered women's safety.** WSCADV currently dedicates 3 staff members to the project with

funding from various sources, including State dollars, private grants, and donations.

When asked to describe the project, Mette Earlywine, WSCADV Program Specialist, points to **selected activities and products of the project including:**

⇒ *In Her Shoes: Living with Domestic Violence – Economic Justice Edition*

Developed from focus groups of women living in poverty, this interactive awareness tool portrays the lives of 7 women while revealing how economic and social resource barriers can impact a woman's safety from violence;

⇒ A regional meeting of coalition advocates on Economic Justice in August 2005, co-hosted with the NNEDV Fund;

- ⇒ Training and consultation to domestic violence advocates, government and social services workers, and other allied individuals and organizations;
- ⇒ Intensive technical assistance to 3 state domestic violence coalitions who are advocating in states without TANF family violence option protections and/or working to expand economic advocacy activities beyond welfare; and
- ⇒ The development of a guide for battered women's advocates designed to help advocates remove economic-related barriers for survivors in their community. *In Our Shoes: The Next Steps* will be published in September 2005.

WSCADV's current economic advocacy grew out of its welfare advocacy in the late 1990s. In 1999, the Coalition partnered with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services to place domestic violence advocates in 19 local welfare offices. These advocates met quarterly, and focused initially on TANF and implementing the family violence option (FVO). In 2001, the Coalition completed an initial assessment of the work and issued a written evaluation. Today there are 39 advocates positioned in welfare offices across the state. More importantly, Washington's welfare system is becoming a better resource for survivors.

LESSONS LEARNED:

1) Economic advocacy effectively informs and supports other initiatives. For example,

at the Coalition: (1) advocates are better able to raise economic issues within public policy reform initiatives, such as unemployment insurance and rental housing discrimination; (2) the Fatality Review Project includes an analysis of how economic security issues may be related to women's deaths; and (3) the Disability Project plans advocate training on SSI – a public benefit for low-income people unable to work due to disability.

2) Moving beyond welfare advocacy is possible and responsive to battered women's needs. WSCADV's welfare advocacy is a springboard for its broader economic-related efforts. For example, helping state welfare workers understand domestic violence led staff to develop *In Her Shoes – Economic Justice Edition*. Welfare advocate quarterly meetings, open to all advocates, cover topics beyond public benefits including living wage, healthcare access, fair housing, and jobs. State agency relationships developed through FVO implementation provide access to housing and community development programs and referrals to key stakeholders. Tyra Lindquist, WSCADV Program Coordinator, emphasizes that you don't have to reinvent the wheel to do economic advocacy. National, state, and local resources are out there that can help. What may be necessary is an approach that "refocuses on what victims are telling us" and responding in ways that may be different.

--Andrea C. Farney, NRCDV Policy Analyst

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

In Her Shoes: Living with Domestic Violence – Economic Justice Edition, and the companion workbook *In Our Shoes: The Next Steps – A Domestic Violence Advocate's Guide to Working for Economic Justice in Your Community* – Ordering information available at www.wscadv.org (Note: State Domestic Violence Coalitions receive complimentary copies.)

Welfare on WorkFirst: Serving Domestic Violence Victims on Public Assistance in Washington State, June 2001 – Available for free download from www.wscadv.org (click on projects and Economic Justice Project)

Related BCS 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.