



Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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My name is Vickie Smith. I am the Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the membership of ICADV. I have been involved in working to end violence against women and children since 1982. The membership of ICADV is made up of 53 local agencies that provide direct advocacy, shelter and supportive services to victims of domestic violence and their children. 19 of these programs are also certified by Department of Human Services Bureau of Domestic and Sexual Violence Services and Prevention to provide partner abuse intervention services. The Bureau also funds victim services and certifies partner abuse intervention programs that are not members of ICADV.

These programs in your communities are just like the fire department. They are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. They never close and are always just a hotline call away. They provide emergency shelter for domestic violence victims and their children, legal advocacy, group and individual counseling for the adults and the children, advocacy with other needed services such as schools, medical providers, TANF, substance abuse and mental health providers, and others as required. In many cases, they also provide other basics such as food, diapers, money for medicine for families who are not in shelter but struggle with day to day needs to remain violence free in their homes.

Over the last three decades we have seen the support for services to domestic violence victims and their families ebb and flow. As with most human services, our opportunities rise and fall with the economy. When the economy is doing well, our programs are able to respond to the requests for assistance more proactively. Then when the economy falters, our programs find themselves hunkering down and cutting back to the bare necessities just so they can be available to the most vulnerable.

During this same time frame, the issue of domestic violence and accompanying problems have permeated our social conscience to the point that most people now understand that physical violence is unacceptable in our home. We all deserve to be safe. We have created shelters and safe places for those in immediate danger to stay until they can get a court order for protection or make other arrangements for a place to live.

The Illinois Legislature has provided a revenue stream for domestic violence intervention services since 1985. When the state budget was solid and stable, this line item grew over time. During the current decade, there have been small increases and decreases that have left the state portion of these services barely \$100,000 higher than 10 years ago.

By the same token, the requests for services continue to rise. This is a good thing. More and more people understand that they do not have to spend their lives being terrorized in their own home by someone they love. They no longer have to raise their children to believe that this is the way family life has to be. This does lead people to believe that when they finally get the courage to call for help, the help is going to be there. Today, programs are looking at making tough decisions about how much availability they can continue to provide given the loss of funding at the national, state and local levels.

Over the last two years, the funded programs in Illinois have experienced significant cuts in the federal funding streams and the local private dollars that make up the rest of their operating budgets. They have had to cut back or lay off staff in an era where the demands have risen exponentially. During one 24 hour period in September 2008, 65 of the DHS funded domestic violence programs in Illinois reported receiving 1,217 hotline calls for service or information. During this period, the programs provided shelter to 1,104 adults and children and another 1,722 adults and children received counseling and advocacy. 909 people were not able to get their requests met due to a shortage of staff able to meet their needs. Programs continue to try to respond to more and more people with fewer and fewer resources. The alternative is more homelessness, increased police calls and more individuals living in their homes in fear.

Absolute minimum, the general revenue line for domestic violence services needs to come back to SFY 2002 level of \$22,119,200.00. Best scenario would be to add an additional \$17,000,000.00 to get programs all over the state up to a level where they did not have to refuse services to anyone asking for assistance. This ultimately has a cost benefit to the state. The fewer children we have growing up in violent homes, the fewer domestic violence services we will need in the future.

Since the 1980's ICADV and its members have searched for revenue enhancements that are acceptable to support these programs. Our initial marriage license fee was found unconstitutional. Last year, the legislature passed a bill allowing an additional \$5.00 dollars added to marriage license fees. This money goes into the Married Families Domestic Violence Fund and is appropriated through the Attorney General to support legal advocacy services. This just went into affect in June of 2008 and has not yet garnered enough income to be allocated. There has been previous consideration of a divorce fee but has not been fully explored. Based on the finding of the Supreme Court in the 1980's the types of funding streams that have been considered must be

supporting court services. This does not help us fund core emergency services. ICADV is always ready to discuss other possibilities.

Thank you for your time and attention. I appreciate the difficult job you have in crafting a budget during this recession. I encourage you to hold to the adage, penny wise is pound foolish.