

Introduction

Since the early 1980's, activists in the battered women's movement have been seeking reform of the criminal justice system to create a more responsive, consistent and coordinated effort to address domestic violence cases. Reform efforts have focused on reducing cultural supports for battering and shifting the responsibility for holding batterers accountable for their use of violence from the victim to the community (Pence and Shepard, 1988). While initial efforts focused on reforming individual components of the justice system, concerns about fragmentation and the absence of a shared vision and public accountability, led to the development of coordinated community responses to domestic violence (Hart, 1995).

Community Intervention Projects (CIP) are advocacy organizations that have focused on the reform and improved coordination of institutional responses to domestic violence within a community. The Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) is a well-known CIP that has been a model for communities in Minnesota, Colorado, California, Wisconsin, and Washington (Tift, 1993). The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project located in Duluth, Minnesota, was initiated in 1980 and gained national recognition as the first community based reform project to successfully negotiate agreements with key criminal justice agencies to coordinate their interventions through a series of written policies and protocols that limited individual discretion in the handling of domestic violence cases and subjected practitioners to minimum standards of response.

In 1995 the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, under the auspices of Minnesota Program Development Inc., received a five year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for a multi-faceted community-based demonstration project to enhance the coordinated response and prevent violence against women in Duluth. The enhancements were targeted toward early identification by bringing new agencies into the community network of response, improving risk assessment and the response to high risk cases within the criminal justice system, developing a computerized monitoring system, and further development of the educational program for offenders.

The evaluation of this multifaceted project has been a challenging undertaking given the number of agencies and practitioners involved. This report does not describe a single study, rather it is composed of several studies that were designed to evaluate various components of the Enhanced Domestic Abuse Intervention Project. It is divided into five sections. Section A examines the success of the project in improving the rates of identification and referral of domestic violence victims by agency practitioners (i.e., public health nurses, employee assistance counselors) not previously involved with DAIP. Section B examines the overall effectiveness of the project in terms of reducing offender recidivism and abusive behavior and improving victim safety and well-being. Section C examines the effectiveness of the Enhanced Men's Non-Violence Program. Sections D and E explore risk assessment, both in terms of its use by practitioners in different settings and its' relationship to recidivism.