

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EVIDENCE PROJECT

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EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE: HOW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS PROMOTE SURVIVORS' SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

In 2015, NRCDV and the Research Consortium on Gender-Based Violence at Michigan State University conducted a systematic review of the empirical evidence for the four most common DV services:

- Emergency Shelters
- Advocacy
- Counseling
- Support Groups

EVIDENCE BEHIND EMERGENCY SHELTER

A review of 17 articles found that, as a result of a shelter stay, survivors across numerous studies reported:

- Feeling safer and having more safety strategies
- Feeling more hopeful
- Knowing more about domestic violence and its effect on themselves and their children
- Higher self-efficacy
- Feeling less isolated
- Fewer trauma-related symptoms

EVIDENCE BEHIND ADVOCACY

A review of 9 articles describing 5 distinct studies found that:

- Broad-based advocacy decreased abuse, increased access to resources, social support, quality of life over two years
- Civil legal advocacy decreases re-abuse, increases wellbeing
- For criminal cases, having an advocate increased prosecution against the perpetrator

"This program saved my life. I had no place to go, no money. I now have a job, apartment, and I am learning how to get over my fears. I don't have nightmares anymore thanks to counseling."

*Survivor from Washington State
Meeting Survivors Needs Through Non-Residential DV Services (2011)*

EVIDENCE BEHIND COUNSELING

A review of 6 articles found that counseling:

- Reduces anxiety
- Reduces depression
- Enhances well-being

“Everyone has been very supportive. I never would have come this far emotionally or financially without the assistance I have received from this program. I have grown as a person and I am now strong enough to encourage my old[er] daughters to have healthy relationships..”

*Survivor from Massachusetts
Meeting Survivors Needs Through Non-Residential DV Services (2011)*

EVIDENCE BEHIND SUPPORT GROUPS

A review of 6 studies specific to domestic violence, as well as a review of the general support group efficacy literature, found that:

- Extensive evidence that support groups improve psychological well-being across numerous populations
- Similar, positive support for the efficacy of support groups for survivors of IPV:
- Greater sense of belonging and decreased distress; members felt more empowered, more connected, and had coping tools to make the changes in their lives they wanted to make

In the Meeting Survivors’ Needs Shelter Study (2008), 3,400 survivors from 8 states were asked to describe what they would have done if the shelter had not existed. Ninety-five percent wrote descriptions that were often poignant and extended, which fell into five general categories: being homeless, losing everything (including their children), a desperate action, uncertainty, and continued abuse/risk of death. Combined with the concerns expressed, these responses indicate that survivors do not go to shelters as a first resort.

If the Shelter Didn’t Exist....

“Be at a homeless shelter or begging friends to stay with them, and putting them at risk of abuse by my ex-boyfriend.”

“I’d be sleeping in my car, lose my children and my job.”

“Stayed with my abuser and continued to get beat every day.”