

Battered Women's Programs in Minnesota

There are several different types of battered women's programs in our state. Many frequently think that the only type of program working with battered women and their children are shelters. While shelter programs are undeniably critical to ensuring the safety and security of women facing battering, they are only one part of a statewide network of programs working to end domestic violence. **Many battered women's agencies in Minnesota are two or more of the following types of programs listed below. In addition, some agencies provide sexual assault and/or general crime services as well as domestic violence services.**

Community Advocacy Programs (79 in state): These programs provide general advocacy services including 24-hour crisis intervention, information and referral, arrangements for emergency housing and transportation to safety, assistance in pursuing civil, criminal and family court remedies, support groups, advocate support at appointments such as court dates, and coordination of services provided by other agencies, violence prevention efforts, and children's programming. Many of these programs are rural and may serve women and children in multiple counties.

Culturally Specific Programs (24 in state): These programs provide a wide range of advocacy services for Asian, Latina, African-American, American Indian, and immigrant and refugee victims of domestic violence although most programs will provide services for all women experiencing battering. They provide much-needed services such as interpreting and bilingual crisis lines for victims of domestic violence, culturally competent advocacy that meets the basic needs of women from various backgrounds, and assisting women in providing emergency housing or shelter services.

Criminal Justice Intervention Programs (32 in state): CJIs programs work with local criminal justice agencies to improve the response to victims of battering. This is done through providing training to criminal justice professionals, tracking all cases from the initial law enforcement response to a domestic abuse call through sentencing, and assisting criminal justice agencies with the development and implementation of effective policies and procedures. CJI programs also focus on advocating for victims of battered whose assailants have been identified by the criminal justice system.

Shelter Programs (24 in state): Shelter programs provide temporary emergency housing for battered women and their children. They also provide the same services as Community Advocacy Programs and often those of CJIs and Culturally Specific Programs.

Other Programs: Other programs working on issues of battering include children's programs, legal advocacy programs, hospital-based advocacy programs, programs providing training and technical assistance to domestic violence agencies, programs working with prostituted women, programs monitoring the state's court response to domestic violence, etc.

The State of Minnesota currently provides a wide range of services to battered women and their children, yet we are still not doing enough to end the epidemic of violence when in 2002, 16 women and 13 children were murdered as a result of domestic violence in our state. Six counties provide no services to battered women at all. The vast majority of domestic violence programs in our state are small, underfunded, and serve women and children from a large geographic area.