

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

“The task ahead of us is never so great as the power behind us.” ~Audre Lorde

Happy New Year from the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women staff! As 2004 begins, it's a fitting time for us to remember the key events, challenges, and celebrations of the past year. This newsletter will also highlight some of the collaborative projects MCBW is pursuing in 2004.

MCBW celebrated our 25th Anniversary in 2003, highlighted by the Silver Jubilee celebration on October 3rd, which incorporated a theme of *Memories, Milestones, and Momentum*. Our 25th Anniversary was a unique opportunity to gather advocates, policymakers, leaders, survivors, and current and former MCBW staff and Board members to reflect on our history, recognize our many accomplishments, and to look forward to the future of Minnesota's battered women's movement. Our Silver Jubilee was a magical evening and we enjoyed seeing old friends and meeting new ones. Thanks to all of you who were able to attend and celebrate with us! We particularly want to thank the Battered Women's Justice Project for creating a presentation highlighting the history of MCBW and the battered women's movement in Minnesota.

The past year was definitely a busy one for us at MCBW. Among our many activities, we:

- Held trainings on LGBT program policies, legislative organizing, and Advocacy 101.

- Worked with the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition to organize the 2003 Violence Against Women Action Day Rally at the Capitol last February, which was attended by over 300 people.

- Partnered with the Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project to conduct six New Laws trainings across Minnesota, and with the Immigrant and Refugee Battered Women's Task Force on training for advocates working with immigrant and refugee women.

- Concluded the multi-year rural policy, protocol, and training project on domestic violence and child victimization, which was a very successful partnership among state agencies, county child protection, the University of Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse, and advocates in four rural regions of the state. Through this project we were able to develop and distribute the manual, *Responding to the Dual Issues of Battering and Child Abuse: Promising Practices for Battered Women's Programs*, to over 100 participating battered women's programs and child protection agencies.

- Participated as a member of the founding committee of the Sheila Wellstone Institute, a program of Wellstone Action. It was an honor to help plan and to participate in the Institute's inaugural confer-

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Winter 2004

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Introductions, Introductions...

Naly Yang, MCBW Training and Program Coordinator

Hello, everyone. I would like to introduce myself to you all. My name is Naly Yang and I started as MCBW's Training and Program Coordinator in November. My chief responsibilities will be organizing MCBW's training programs and our Women of Color Network, LGBT Network, and the Youth and Children's Advocates Network.

I was born in Sayaboury, Laos and came to Milwaukee, Wisconsin with my family in 1976 as refugees of the Vietnam War. Two years after resettlement, my family moved to St. Paul, Minnesota where I grew up attending the local public schools and graduated from Como Park Senior High. I went on to obtain my Bachelor of Arts degree in History, with a concentration in Women's Studies, from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota.

I attribute my strong commitment to the nonprofit sector to the volunteer work I did as a child for extended family members. Since graduating from Carleton, I have worked at the Management Assis-

tance Program (MAP) for Nonprofits, the Women's Association of Hmong and Lao, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, the Minnesota Literacy Council, and the Department of Public Safety – Center for Crime Victim Services (now the Office of Justice Programs). I come to the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women with seven years' worth of advocacy experience.

Currently, I am a student at Hamline University where I am pursuing a master's degree in management. In my spare time, I like to read, spend time with my family and friends, and garden (when it's not winter out).

I am looking forward to meeting and connecting with MCBW member programs. If you would like to get in touch with me to talk about training opportunities or the MCBW networks, or just to get acquainted, feel free to call me at (651) 646-6177 or email me at nyang@mcbw.org.

More Introductions...

Elina Woods, MCBW Administrative Assistant

Greetings! My name is Elina Woods, and I started as MCBW's Administrative Assistant in November. I'm really thrilled to be a staff member of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women.

I am a native of St. Louis, Missouri and one of six siblings. The importance of education and an improved living environment led my parents and family to Minnesota where we resided in Brooklyn Center, until my father's sudden death in 1989.

I am a graduate of Central High School in St Paul. After deciding to pursue a career in business administration I attended Minneapolis Business College. While in school, I volunteered my time with African American Family Services and worked part-time at Lutheran Social Services. Through this work, I discovered my true passion, helping youth and adults overcome obstacles in their lives. Realizing the important need for female role models I assisted social workers at LSS lead a program for at-risk teenage females.

After graduating I accepted a position with the State

of Minnesota Council on Black Minnesotans where I spent four years and later I worked for Recourses for Child Caring in St. Paul. Now at MCBW I continue my commitment to working with women, youth, and the unique concerns of Minnesota's minority population. I also bring experience in public administration, extensive connections with St. Paul and Minneapolis communities, and experience working with families of diverse backgrounds.

I enjoy striving to help others but cherish most the time spent with my siblings, family, and close friends.

Please feel free to call me at any time at (651) 646-6177 or email me at ewoods@mcbw.org. One of the aspects about being a staff member of MCBW that I am really excited about is getting to know our diverse members from all over the state!

The Task Ahead of Us...

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ence held in November.

- Embarked on two major new projects. Through funding from the Altria Foundation, the Coalition will lead a project to create a public awareness campaign geared towards teens of color and immigrant and refugee teenagers. In addition, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe is working with MCBW, the Gender Violence Institute, Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition, Community Resources Alliance, along with White Earth and Leech Lake battered women's advocacy programs and criminal justice system partners to strengthen arrest policies and OFP enforcement in tribal and state jurisdictions on the White Earth and Leech Lake reservations (for more information on this project, turn to page 8).

MCBW welcomed three new staff members in 2003, including Cyndi Cook as Executive Director, Naly Yang as Training and Program Coordinator, and Elina Woods as Administrative Assistant. In addition, Lonna Stevens moved from the Program Coordinator position to become our Public Policy and Legislative Coordinator. We also had to say goodbye in the last year to Delrita Rudnitski, who had been our Interim Executive Director; to Lisa Radzak, Legislative Coordinator; Sandy Davidson, Rural Grant Coordinator; and the four Community Specialists working on the rural grant: Dorian Eder, Kathy Hesch, Janell Hunt, and Beth Olsen. We thank them for their immeasurable contributions to MCBW.

One of the biggest issues MCBW and its members faced in 2003 was the State of Minnesota's severe budget cuts for battered women's programs and the subsequent redistribution of funds throughout the state. This posed an unprecedented challenge for our members as programs in much of the state had their state funding cut up to 25%. MCBW staff members attended the planning sessions for the new funding distribution in all 11 judicial districts to support our members through this process.

As we gear up for the 2004 legislative session and November elections, MCBW is advocating that the current judicial district funding plan be set aside and that the crime victim services funding that has been cut over the last three years be reinstated. It is clear that Minnesota has failed its women and children by cutting battered women, sexual assault, general crime, and abused children's programs. It is time that the safety and security of victims and survivors be foremost on the minds of the leaders of this state. Minnesota *can* afford safety for women and children.

Most importantly, we need to thank you, our member programs, for all you do for battered women and their children. You are the ones who, every day, offer hope and healing to women rebuilding their lives. You are the ones on the front lines of what seems to be a war against women on so many fronts. We thank you for creating a social movement in our state, for working to change systems, and for being leaders in the effort to seek safety, justice, and a brighter future for women and their children.

Images from the MCBW Silver Jubilee Celebration on October 3, 2003



The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Allies Network

Jolie Snow, OutFront Minnesota

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Allies Network is a collaboration of programs, advocates, and interested individuals who want to examine domestic and sexual violence in the LGBT community.

Members of the network are working on an evaluation of services to the LGBT community in Minnesota. The outcome of the evaluation will be presented at the OutFront Minnesota Conference on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

The Network has also formed a sub-committee think tank on the topic of "Gendering Violence." This group will study issues surrounding gender and violence and ultimately will create position statements. The next meeting will be March 18th.

The next meeting for the full network will be **Thursday, March 25** after the LGBT Rally at the Capitol.

For more information on the network contact Naly Yang of MCBW at (651) 646-6177, Jolie Snow of OutFront MN at (612) 822-0127, ext 101 or Jude Foster (MNCASA) at (612) 313-2792, ext. 205.

OutFront Minnesota, along with the co-sponsorship of Target Corporation and the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, will be hosting a conference on **May 21 and 22, 2004**. The conference is titled *Re-Examining Our Approach to Domestic and Sexual Violence in the LGBT Community* and will include workshops such as: Redefining Services to Women; Creating Transgender Inclusiveness in Your Program, Domestic and Sexual Violence in the Older LGBT Relationships, Creating Perpetrator Accountability Within the Community, Gendering Violence, and more to be announced.

We hope you will join us at the LGBTTA Network and at the conference!

The Meeting Victims' Needs Post-Conviction Study Group Report

Michael Bischoff

In 2003, the Minnesota Department of Corrections and the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs sponsored a study group, which made recommendations for how the needs of survivors/victims could be more fully addressed after the conviction of an offender. The Meeting Victims' Needs Post-Conviction Study Group included 30 participants from many forms of victim services, victim support groups, corrections, and other aspects of the criminal justice system. Delrita Rudnitski, the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women's Interim Executive Director at the time, was one of the study group members.

The study group developed recommendations for many agencies in Minnesota, including victim services agencies. Knowing that budgets for victim services are being reduced in many areas, the study group divided its report into short-term recommendations with little or no financial cost, and long-term ideal recommenda-

tions. While the Department of Corrections is beginning to implement some of these recommendations, follow through on the recommendations at local levels will rely on grassroots initiative from advocates and others who are passionate about the conditions for victims/survivors after the trial is over.

The *Meeting Victims' Needs Post-Conviction Study Group Report* is available online at:

www.clarityfacilitation.com/postconviction. This web page includes the full report as well as a list of recommendations just for victim services agencies. Advocates can also use the report to work with corrections and other parts of the criminal justice system to improve how those systems treat crime victims. For more information about the study group, contact Michael Bischoff at 612-521-1889 or michael@clarityfacilitation.com.

The Minnesota Network on Abuse in Later Life

Bernice Sisson, President, MNALL Board of Directors

As involved and committed individuals and programs serving Minnesota seniors, the Minnesota Network on Abuse in Later Life seeks your active participation and input as we continue providing training, education and technical support while building community collaborations to meet the unique needs of later life victims of domestic and sexual elder abuse.

MNALL's long term goal is to have community partnerships in every area of Minnesota that will respond as needed when senior victims of abuse are identified or reach out for help. These partnerships provide the most effective advocacy and support, at the same time as they reduce the burden on each program, agency and individual advocate.

We welcome your willingness to share your expertise as we grow partnerships and create an atmosphere of safety for Minnesota's elders.

For MNALL's mission statement and organizational information, as well as a downloadable application form, please go to the MCBW web site at www.mcbw.org/mnall.htm.

Benefits of membership:

- *MNALL will hold training/information exchanges in 2004 at locations throughout Minnesota. Each session will be eligible for continuing education credits. The membership determines the targeted subject.*
- *MNALL will hold annual statewide membership meetings.*
- *MNALL is creating an e-mail discussion list for members to network.*
- *MNALL maintains a library of informational materials and videos addressing abuse in later life which are available to members*

The Minnesota Network on Abuse in Later Life welcomes your participation and support!

The MNALL Annual Membership Meeting is **February 11th** and the next training is **March 10th**. Please call (651) 636-5311 for more info. A full training schedule is available at www.mcbw.org/mnall.htm.

THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACTION DAY RALLY AT THE CAPITOL

**NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE ACTION TO END
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND
SEXUAL ASSAULT!**

JOIN THE COMMUNITY RESOURCE ALLIANCE,
THE MN COALITION FOR BATTERED WOMEN,
THE MN NETWORK ON ABUSE IN LATER LIFE AND
THE MN INDIAN WOMEN'S SEXUAL ASSAULT COALITION ON

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2004
1:00-2:00 PM AT THE CAPITOL ROTUNDA,
ST. PAUL**

Call (651) 646-6177 for more information or go to www.mcbw.org.

Minnesota CAN afford safety for women and children!

The State of Minnesota v. McCoy

MCBW requested that it be allowed to participate as an *amicus* in an appeal to the Minnesota Supreme Court. An *amicus* is a person/organization who has permission to intervene in a case in which they are neither plaintiff or defendant, usually to present their point of view in a case that has the potential of setting a legal precedent in their area of activity.

Working in collaboration with the Battered Women's Justice Project and Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, the request for *amicus* status was granted and a brief was filed on behalf of MCBW, the Battered Women's Justice Project, and Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights. MCBW was represented by Beverly Balos of the University of Minnesota Law School.

The case involved a criminal conviction in Ramsey County for domestic assault. The defendant was charged with interference with an emergency call and domestic assault. The victim in the case was the defendant's wife. The prosecutor sought to introduce evidence of the wife's prior report to the police and medical personnel of another incident of abuse by her husband. The trial court judge ruled that the evidence of the prior report of abuse was admissible under Minn. Stat. § 634.20.

At the conclusion of the trial, the jury found the defendant guilty of domestic assault. The defendant appealed the conviction and the court of appeals reversed the conviction holding that before evidence of

the prior incident can be admitted, the court must determine that the evidence of the similar conduct is clear and convincing. Prior to this ruling judges were permitted to allow the introduction of similar conduct under the statute if the probative value of the evidence was not outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice, confusion, undue delay or waste of time. After the court of appeals decision reversing the conviction, the Ramsey County Attorney's Office petitioned the Minnesota Supreme Court to review the case. The review was granted and MCBW, along with the Battered Women's Justice Project and Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, filed an *amicus* brief to support reversing the court of appeals and reinstating the trial court conviction.

Prosecutors believe that this court of appeals ruling requiring a higher standard of proof for the introduction of similar evidence in a domestic assault criminal prosecution will make successful prosecution of these cases more difficult. MCBW considers the decision to be a step backward in the development of effective laws to respond to domestic violence. If left unchallenged, this decision can derail many years of successful advocacy directed toward improving the safety of domestic violence victims and their children and deprive prosecutors of an effective tool in holding offenders accountable. The case is currently under review by the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Sheila Wellstone Institute Launches New Initiative

The Sheila Wellstone Institute is launching an initiative designed to embolden our efforts to make ending domestic violence and sexual assault a civic and political priority.

We know our work can be magnified by the power of grassroots organizing. Therefore we will provide training and tools to domestic violence and sexual assault advocates and practitioners, organizational staff and board members, and dedicated community members committed to stopping violence against women and children and supporting those who have been victims of violence.

We can fortify our efforts if we:

- Develop expertise in mobilizing, training, and utilizing volunteers in our organizations.
- Learn how to combine convictions with an ability to mobilize others to help build support and power to accomplish our goals.

- Mobilize citizens to translate the issues of violence against women from a private concern to a powerful public issue that must be addressed.
- Build and foster support in our communities and with public officials.
- Explore ways to join with others in our communities to achieve common goals.
- Utilize and develop new skills, talents and understanding that will move the agenda forward.
- Learn how to help and encourage others to raise their voices in support.
- Learn to engage the voices of those touched by violence in a positive way that will have an impact on the political agenda of the state and country.

Watch www.wellstone.org for details. Training will begin in the spring of 2004. Contact Connie Lewis at connie@wellstone.org with questions or comments.

Update: Minnesota Rules of Guardian Ad Litem Procedure in Juvenile and Family Court

As many of you are aware, the Minnesota Supreme Court recently completed a draft revision of the Rules of Guardian Ad Litem Procedure and sought input from MCBW and our member programs on the proposed changes. MCBW submitted comments on the proposed changes with contributions from Dorian Eder, Mitzi Nauclear (Minnesota Program Development), Loretta Frederick (Battered Women's Justice Project), Nicole Lindemyer (Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project), and Shellene Johnson (The Refuge).

Generally, the proposed rule changes appeared more concise than before and should be easier to apply. We strongly supported the addition of specific prohibitions on activities of Guardians Ad Litem (GAL) that were not prohibited in the original rules. Along with the prohibitions, there were more concise responsibilities that should make for a cleaner process and more credible GAL input into the court process. In particular, we were encouraged by the standard set forth in the new rules that requires that each GAL recommendation be in writing and contain a recitation of the facts upon which it is based. The proposed rules addressed many of the issues raised since the adoption of the original rules, which we believe will give better guidance to both GALs and the judiciary.

We were concerned, however, about the removal of specific guidelines for GAL qualifications and training requirements. We were specifically concerned that the new language eliminated the enumeration of mini-

mum qualifications and training requirements for GALs and instead gave the power to establish qualifications to the Office of the State Court Administrator with the advice and consent of the Conference of Chief Judges. We believe that it is imperative that there be uniformity of good practice statewide and that maintaining some qualification and training language in the rules would more likely ensure that high quality GAL work occurs in all corners of Minnesota. Although we are not certain that the formerly enumerated qualifications and training requirements represented best practices in the field in the United States, we know that other states have done work in this area and recommended that this issue be explored further.

In particular, we recommended that training on domestic violence be a requirement of service as a GAL. In the context of Family Court a large number, and often a majority, of cases in which GALs are assigned involve domestic violence. There is significant research indicating that a fundamental knowledge of domestic violence and its dynamics by court personnel is critical to ensuring the safety of battered women and their children. Many jurisdictions throughout the country (including Minnesota) already require specific training in domestic violence for judges. We do not believe that it is too strong a statement to say that GALs cannot represent the best interests of children exposed to domestic violence without mandatory training in the dynamics of

The Minnesota Corporate Citizenship Initiative

Maura Lynch, Community Violence Prevention Institute, Metropolitan State University

The Minnesota Corporate Citizenship Initiative (CCI) is led by the Community Violence Prevention Institute at Metropolitan State University. Along with the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, it is a diverse team of domestic violence programs, businesses, law enforcement, unions, formerly battered women, legal systems professionals, health care professionals, and others who provide leadership and expertise to motivate and support Minnesota employers to be part of the solution to domestic violence. It is a key resource to employers for effective domestic violence policies and response systems.

The Corporate Citizenship Initiative offers periodic Executive Briefing sessions to help business leaders understand the impact of this problem on their workplaces. The next briefings are **Tuesday, February**

10 and Friday, April 16, from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College,

CCI also offers the Partner Achievement Process Certificate class to provide a framework for coordinated workplace responses to domestic violence at all levels of an organization, large or small---human resources, managers, etc. There are classes coming up on **Tuesday, March 9** and **Tuesday, April 6**, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., also at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College.

For more information on the Minnesota Corporate Citizenship Initiative classes, go to the CCI listings at <http://www.minneapolis.edu/cect/courseSchedule/index.cfm> for more information and to register, or contact Maura Lynch at (651) 793-1351 or maura.lynch@metrostate.edu.

Strengthening Arrest Prosecution, Enforcement of Protection Orders, and Legal/Systems Advocacy for Native American Women

Gender Violence Institute, Clearwater, MN

Native Americans experience rates of violence that are twice the national average

(American Indians and Crime Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Native American women are five times more likely to be domestic homicide victims than the rest of the population

(U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Collaborating for Safety for Native American Women is a two-year project, funded by the U.S. Office on Justice - Office on Violence Against Women and under the fiscal agency of the Minnesota Chipewewa Tribe, to enhance the safety and integrity of Native American women and their families. The project seeks to coordinate the efforts of tribal leaders, law enforcement, and battered women's programs with city and county law enforcement agencies in order to enhance their interventive powers when responding to domestic violence on and surrounding the White Earth and Leech Lake Reservations. Organized and coordinated by the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition, and the Gender Violence Institute, the project includes funding for additional personnel for the battered women's programs, equipment and/or overtime for each of the seven participating law enforcement agencies and training and technical assistance opportunities for all participants.

The collaborative methods that the project will utilize have been demonstrated to be effective nationwide in enhancing victim safety, increasing accountability for perpetrators and creating a general deterrence for crimes of domestic violence. The project will provide opportunities for the involved agencies to: a) Assess and evaluate current individual agency and inter-agency practices and needs; b) Identify best practices in operation in other areas and adapt these where possible to local conditions with specific consideration to the needs of Native American victims and their children; c) Standardize and institutionalize best practices through policy, protocol, procedure, and form development; d) Develop a system for tracking and monitoring cases; and e) Participate in technical assistance, training, and networking opportunities.

Through this grant, tribal, local, state, and national organizations with expertise in the development and

implementation of best practices will be consulted regarding the most effective interventions in domestic violence-related crime. Collaborations will also build on the work that tribes have already done to strengthen the networks and practices of law enforcement, prosecution, the court, and advocacy programs. Reservations, counties, and communities will coordinate their individual and reciprocal practices to assure a consistent response to domestic violence while clarifying and standardizing the roles of the various involved jurisdictions of tribal, city, and/or county law enforcement offices. The grant will also provide the most current training available for each of the grant partners. In particular, training will focus on dispatching the calls, investigations, prosecution, advocacy, and the coordination of an ongoing collaborative response to domestic assault cases. Implemented changes will be evaluated through ongoing case review, information exchange, networking, and systematic tracking and monitoring. A final evaluation will be conducted at the end of the project and a manual will be created outlining the methods, activities, and outcomes of the project for use in replicating these efforts in other parts of the state and/or nation.

Project collaborators on Leech Lake Reservation include the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tribal Government, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Department of Public Safety, Leech Lake Family Violence Prevention and Intervention Program, Cass Lake Police Department, Pike Bay Township Police Department, Cass County Sheriff's Office, Cass County Attorney's Office. On the White Earth Reservation, collaborators are the White Earth Band of Ojibwe Tribal Government, White Earth Band of Ojibwe Department of Public Safety, The DOVE Project, Becker County Sheriff's Office, Mahnomon County Sheriff's Office, Becker County Attorney's Office, and the Mahnomon County Attorney's Office.

Update on MCBW's Legislative Agenda

Lonna Stevens, Public Policy and Legislative Coordinator

With the February 2, 2004 start of the Minnesota Legislative session at hand, I want to bring everyone up to date on the status of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women legislative policy agenda for this year. This update will focus on three areas: 1) MCBW policy initiatives; 2) Potentially harmful legislation that MCBW will be monitoring; and, 3) Policy initiatives of other organizations that MCBW is supporting.

Please look for regular MCBW-Members e-mail updates on all of these issues as we move quickly through what is expected to be a short and fast-paced legislative session.

I. MCBW Policy initiatives

The MCBW legislative priorities for 2004 were determined at the Annual Membership meeting in October. After reviewing and discussing a number of emerging issues identified in MCBW member surveys, the decision was made to focus on a few legislative changes that had broad member support and seemed "do-able" in a short and potentially inhospitable session.

MCBW priority public policy changes selected at the 2003 membership meeting included:

- 1) Mandating training for Guardian Ad Litem (GALs), custody evaluators, judges and child protection workers;
- 2) Expanding criteria for petitioners seeking Order for Protection extensions when a respondent is released or about to be released from incarceration;
- 3) Reducing inappropriate or plea bargains to disorderly conduct in domestic violence cases.

In addition, the MCBW membership set some priority work groups to develop legislative agenda items to pursue in 2005. These include: 1) Establishing domestic violence advocate privilege/confidentiality 2) Clarifying and enhancing Minnesota firearm prohibitions; and 3) Seeking safe and affordable housing for battered women and their children. If you are interested in serving on one or more of these work groups, please contact me at lstevens@mcbw.org.

The MCBW Legislative Advisory Group (LAG) has been discussing possible bill language and strategies to pursue the 2004 priority areas for the last few months. Two of the priority areas have many roadblocks this year: the LAG recommended that MCBW work on domestic violence training for court personnel and the issues related to disorderly conduct plea bargains outside of the State Legislature at this time, so we will be forming work groups for these as well.

Finally, the LAG recommended the addition of a legislative change that would allow victims of domestic violence and their legal representatives to receive a copies of domestic violence incident reports relevant to their situation. The proposed language was circulated to the MCBW membership e-mail discussion list and the response was positive, so MCBW will also seek support for this change in 2004.

As you know, things can change quickly at the State Legislature, but as of this newsletter printing, MCBW will go forward with two policy items this session that will: 1) Increase the conditions for which a petitioner may seek an OFP extension when the respondent is incarcerated; and 2) Increase access to police reports for battered women and their legal representation.

II. Potentially harmful legislation that MCBW will be monitoring

There are a number of legislative initiatives that are counter to MCBW's commitment to promoting social justice for all. We will be monitoring these issues and bringing information to your attention as the session moves forward. We anticipate the following proposals this session:

- A constitutional amendment to prohibit gay and lesbian marriage;
- A constitutional amendment to impose the death penalty in Minnesota for certain crimes;
- Bills that interfere with a woman's right to choose; and
- Bills that curtail the rights of minors to independently seek services.

III. Policy initiatives of other organizations that MCBW is supporting

We want to let you know about several initiatives being proposed by partner organizations that could be of great benefit to battered women and their children. We will be working closely with the Legal Services Advocacy Project, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, and the Children's Defense Fund on their initiatives this session.

Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP)

LSAP was created more than 20 years ago to represent the interests of low-income Minnesotans before legislative and administrative bodies. In 2004, battered women and their children would be among the beneficiaries of the following legislative initiatives

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Update on MCBW's Legislative Agenda

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that LSAP is pursuing:

Landlord/tenant:

- **Expungement.** LSAP will be opposing the landlords bill to narrow the standard for expungement of eviction records and is behind a bill authored by Sen. Berglin that would broaden the standard for eviction expungements and make the criteria more like that used for expungement of criminal records.
- **Allowing victims of domestic abuse to break their leases without penalty.** LSAP will begin work this session on what will be at least a 2-year effort to pass legislation allowing domestic abuse victims to break their leases early. This legislation has passed in at least 2 states.

Family law and domestic abuse:

- **Child support.** LSAP continues to have concerns with this legislation. They will try to get the Neville/Smith income shares bill modified in the Senate with further amendments to put it in the best shape possible for conference committee where we will lobby for the Senate version of the bill.
- **Removal bill.** This bill changes the standard and burden of proof for out of state moves by a custodial parent. Under this bill, the burden of proof would be on the custodial parent to show it is in the best interests of the child(ren) to move out of state. LSAP was successful last session in attaching an amendment to the bill in both the House and the Senate that would shift the burden of proof back to the non-custodial parent in cases of domestic abuse. LSAP will continue to monitor the bill but will no longer actively oppose it.

Other family law legislation:

- There were a number of other family law bills from last session that LSAP worked on that are included in the omnibus child support and family law bill. LSAP will continue to monitor these this session to make sure there are no harmful amendments.
- LSAP has been actively working with DEED (the Department of Employment and Economic Development) on legislation they are proposing in the area of unemployment insurance.
- LSAP has been told that DHS will have a bill amending some of the child protection statutes, particularly in the area of alternative response. LSAP may actively work for or against the legislation, depending on the specifics.
- LSAP will work to repeal the \$100 SSI penalty and the \$50 housing penalty that was passed by the legislature last year.

For more information on LSAP's legislative agenda, please call Nancy Mischel at (651) 222-3749.

Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (MCH):

The MCH mission is to end homelessness and develop flexible resources so that each community can develop an affordable housing and homelessness response system to meet its needs.

During the 2004 Legislative Session, MCH will:

- Advocate for a \$20 million bonding proposal for the construction and rehabilitation.
- Advocate to restore the \$2.7 million cut last year from emergency shelter and transitional housing programs.
- Advocate for a statewide minimum standard for the Emergency Assistance Program.
- Advance the Housing Opportunities Made Equitable (HOME) Campaign.
- Advocate to reverse the most harmful cuts made in the 2003 session, which include: 1) \$125 SSI Penalty; 2) \$50 Housing Penalty; 3) Cuts to youth services; 4) Cuts to battered women's programs; 5) Increased co-pays and reduced benefits in health care programs.

For more information, please visit MCH's website at www.mnhomelesscoalition.org or call Liz Kuoppala at (612) 870-7073

Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota (CDF):

The mission of the CDF is to Leave No Child Behind and to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. They pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities.

During the upcoming legislative session, CDF will:

- Propose a universal children's health care plan that would reduce costs, streamline administration, and provide a higher quality of care for Minnesota's children.
- Advocate for the reinstatement of the \$86 million in cuts to child care in Minnesota.

For more information on the Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota, please call Minh Ta at (651) 855-1173 or e-mail on ta@cdf-mn.org.

For more information on MCBW policy initiatives or the Legislative Advisory Group, please call Lonna at (651) 646-6177.

Thank You to Our AMAZING Donors and Volunteers!

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