



July 9, 2012
DPS PR# 12-022

Grant Awarded to Service Providers and Programs by CDVSA

(JUNEAU, Alaska) – The Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) recently awarded over \$11,730,000 to victim service providers and programs providing batterers intervention in prisons and communities for the 2013 state fiscal year. The funds are a combination of state and federal dollars aimed at increasing safety for victims and holding offenders accountable for their actions.

Communities from Barrow to Kodiak and Unalaska to Ketchikan rely on these funds to provide safe shelter, 24-hour crisis lines, advocacy and support services to people needing to escape the violence in which they find themselves trapped. While immediate safety is always at the forefront of services, efforts to strengthen prevention strategies are increasing.

Michelle DeWitt, Executive Director of Tundra Women's Coalition in Bethel agrees, "An essential aspect of victim service work is prevention. Our work with youth through Teens Acting Against Violence, our collaboration with the Elluatmun Prevention group and work with media campaigns such as the "When I'm an Elder" series are all key strategies at TWC. Funds from CDVSA allow us to continue leveraging funds for these and other important prevention projects."

"One of the wonderful prevention efforts LeeShore is able to provide in our community thanks to funding from CDVSA is through our Healthy Relationships/Violence Prevention work with in-school (grades K-12) and area youth. We provide age-appropriate information and education on a variety of violence prevention related topics, such as dating violence, sexual harassment, healthy relationships, domestic violence, staying safe, etc. During the last school year we provided 151 prevention presentations reaching over 3,000 youth," said Cheri Smith, Executive Director of the LeeShore Center in Kenai.

Children exposed to violence benefit from specialized care and support. Programs such as Aiding Women in Abuse and Rape Emergencies in Juneau emphasize working with children who come to shelter with their parents. Saralyn Tabachnick, Executive Director of AWARE, says "AWARE provides services for over 200 children every year. It's critical that each child has the support and understanding to know they are not responsible for the violence they've witnessed or endured, and to build communication, decision making, and socialization skills. Funding from CDVSA supports our work with children and parents, and teaches children that violence is a learned behavior, which can be unlearned."

Too often victims of sexual assault feel like there is nowhere to turn, feel ashamed and wonder what they did to cause such pain, what they should have done differently. Standing Together Against Rape (STAR) in Anchorage provides advocacy, emotional support, and crisis intervention for victims of sexual assault and their loved ones, whether the pain was incurred 5 hours or 15 years ago. Keeley Olson, STAR's Program Director says: "It is imperative to have understanding and support when facing the consequence of sexual trauma. Funding provided from CDVSA is critical to making support, education, and prevention efforts possible."

Men convicted of a domestic violence offense and ordered into a batterers' intervention program have an opportunity to change their behavior and learn non-violent ways to participate in relationships. Located in the Mat-Su, Alaska Family

Services (AFS) has provided, for more than a decade, batterer's intervention services. CEO, Donn Bennice states "We find them an essential piece of the domestic violence puzzle. It has been AFS's experience that the majority of victims return to their partners and these services give hope that the cycle will be broken."

CDVSA Chair, Susan Cushing, is proud of the commitment shown by women and men working in Alaska's victim service and batterers' intervention programs: "Our programs are staffed by people working quietly and steadily on the front lines to protect and shelter families in crisis. Although there will never be enough money to adequately pay them for their service, they are heroes to Alaska. Each region of the state has a slightly different awareness of issues of violence, but the common denominator is that we have a serious and PREVENTABLE public health problem. The consequences on the lives of children, individuals, families and communities are devastating. To stop domestic violence and sexual assault takes time to change patterns, heal grief, treat pain, but we must never give up trying. The Council thanks the programs for their continued dedication and tireless service."

For victim service program contact information go to: <http://dps.alaska.gov/CDVSA/help/victims.aspx>

For batterers intervention program contact information go to: <http://dps.alaska.gov/CDVSA/docs/FY12ApprovedBIPs.pdf>

Contact: Lauree Morton, Executive Director
Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
lauree.morton@alaska.gov
(907) 465-4356