

The Source

Spring 2005

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Michigan Resource Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

In Brief: Confronting the Sexual Abuse of Women with Disabilities

By R. Amy Elman, Ph.D

Accessed from the National Electronic Network on Violence Against Women, January 2005.

Women with disabilities are often overlooked in research on and activism to end the sexual abuse of women. This omission is particularly troubling considering that the limited research to date consistently reveals that men sexually abuse women with disabilities at a similar or higher rate than women without disabilities. This report offers a critical summary of studies pertaining to the sexual abuse of women with disabilities. Further, it draws on that summary and critique to recommend that professionals and activists remedy what is at present a deeply disturbing oversight by committing to the provision of services and outreach, as well as the undertaking of research activities, tailored to address the needs and experiences of this population.

The existing research on the sexual abuse of women with disabilities suffers from inconsistencies in methods, definitions, timeframes, and populations. As a result, it is difficult if not impossible to reach nuanced conclusions based on empirical research findings. Indeed, the disparities in findings are often so great that we cannot be certain we are even discussing the same problem. Moreover, the overwhelmingly narrow focus on measuring the incidence of abuse (often defined inconsistently), is itself a concern as it usually precludes considering the details of women's experiences. This oversight may unintentionally perpetuate the very invisibility and silence that women with disabilities strive to overcome. Clearly, the combination of inconsistencies and narrowness compromises one's ability to design, implement, and evaluate responsive prevention programs developed to the specific needs of women with disabilities.

In addition to more carefully designed research, this report calls for increasing the

visibility of women with disabilities in public information campaigns. This may be one of the only effective ways to counter the social cynicism women with disabilities experience in coming forward to reveal their experiences of sexual abuse. Internet campaigns designed to raise awareness of the issue can also serve as an important organizing tool for sexually abused women with the added benefit of rescinding the security and sense of entitlement that perpetrators often gain through their use (abuse) of that very medium. Furthermore, on a legal and administrative level, indifference toward sexually abused women with disabilities could be confronted by revisiting both the Hate Crimes Statistics Act and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and revising them to forcefully address the particular needs of these victims.

Women with disabilities are not asexual. Researchers, activists, and service providers who fail to integrate issues of gender and disability for these women do them a great disservice.

To access a full copy of this report, please visit <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/vavnet/arsvanddisability/arsvanddisability.pdf>

Terror at Home: Domestic Violence in America

Terror at Home: Domestic Violence in America is a documentary that puts a real-time lens on domestic abuse, the escape and the complex aftermath for women and their families. The film features women from all walks of life, who have endured the trauma of domestic violence and found the strength to come forward and share their stories in the hope of helping others. *Terror at Home: Domestic Violence in America* is about breaking the silence surrounding domestic violence. It is about how all of us — women and men — have a role to play in preventing violence by standing up and speaking out against this epidemic.

To borrow this video, contact the Resource Center at (517) 381-4663.

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National Domestic Violence Hotline
Linea Nacional sobre la Violencia Domestica
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
TTY 1-800-787-3224

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

New Print Resources

- **The Leading 100 New Foundations Funding Women and Girls**
- **Grant Writing: Beyond the Basics**
- **From Vision to Action**
- **Sexual Abuse in Nine North American Cultures: Treatment and Prevention**
- **Federal Grants Management Handbook**
- **The Price of Government: Getting the Results We Need in an Age of Permanent Fiscal Crisis**
- **Forensic Nurse: The New Role of the Nurse in Law Enforcement**
- **Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Rural Diversity Training Curriculum**
- **Inside the Classroom: Sexual Assault Prevention Education**
- **Grief at Work: A Manual of Policies and Practices**

Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools

To more than two million lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth of school age living in the United States and to those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, Dylan N.'s story is all too familiar. It is a story of harassment, abuse, and violence; a story of deliberate indifference by school officials who disclaim any responsibility for protecting Dylan or ensuring his right to an education; a story of escalating violence; a story of the failure of legal protection; and finally, a story of a young man denied an education because of his sexual orientation. In this report, Human Rights Watch documents attacks on the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth who are subjected to abuse on a daily basis by their peers and in some cases by teachers and school administrators. These violations are compounded by the failure of federal, state, and local governments to enact laws providing students with express protection from discrimination and violence based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, effectively allowing school officials to ignore violations of these students' rights. To access a full copy of this report, visit <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/toc.htm>

Elder Sexual Abuse: The Hidden Victim

The Florida Coalition Against Sexual Violence released a comprehensive training curriculum for law enforcement officers who respond to and investigate the sexual assault of elders. *Elder Sexual Abuse: The Hidden Victim* includes a trainer's guide featuring detailed activities and talking points, PowerPoint presentations and participant materials. All of the documents are also available on a CD. Materials may be adapted to fit the needs of your community. To borrow this resource, please contact the Resource Center at (517) 381-4663.

Volunteer Opportunities Available at the Michigan Resource Center!

The Michigan Resource Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence is seeking volunteers to assist with the day-to-day upkeep of the Resource Center. Please forward any inquiries to Melissa Limon at (517) 381-4663, ext.17.

New Resource Available: DADDY & PAPA

DADDY & PAPA is a one hour documentary exploring the personal, cultural, and political impact of gay men who are making a decision that is traditional and revolutionary: to raise children themselves. Taking us inside four gay male families, *DADDY & PAPA* traces the day-to-day challenges and the larger, critical issues that inevitably intersect their private lives—the ambiguous place of interracial families in America, the wonder and precariousness of surrogacy and adoption, the complexities of marriage and divorce within the gay community, and the legality of their own parenthood.

As fathers, these men must take on numerous challengers: from conservatives who regard them the very antithesis of family; to average Americans who believe mothers are essential to a child's development; to the gay community, where hard-won independence and sexual freedoms often clash with the demands of parenting. The legal hurdles alone can be daunting—the list of countries restricting international adoption by single men or gay couples is rapidly expanding, and many states are outlawing gay adoption altogether.

Despite all these obstacles, America is in the midst of a "gayby boom," with thousands of gay men across the country making the conscious decision to become fathers. *DADDY & PAPA* enters into the heart of the debate over gay fatherhood, examining the value of alternative households, the effects of gender and sexual orientation on children, and the changing face of the American family. To borrow this resource, contact the Resource Center at (517) 381-4663.

Global Perspectives on Sexual Violence

This document seeks to offer a glimpse of the "serious global public health problem" that is sexual violence as well as promising practices and opportunities for those working to end sexual violence. It begins by defining sexual violence and discussing its prevalence. It then moves on to identify and define societal risk factors, including war, poverty, gender-based inequality, male entitlement, and absent or weak sanctions and services. The report also takes a look at promising public health approaches to ending sexual violence, focusing on collaborative and multi-disciplinary efforts from around the world. It concludes with recommendations for multi-level social change for those working in the anti-violence movement. This resource is available online at http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/booklets/global_perspectives.pdf.

New Online Journal Explores Domestic Violence In Health Care and Public Health Settings

Reprinted with permission from the Family Violence Prevention Fund Newsflash

The Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF) launched an unprecedented online journal in January. *Family Violence Prevention and Health Practice* is the first journal to be entirely dedicated to domestic and family violence in the health care context.

The premiere issue features a guest editorial by the President of the American Medical Association. It also includes articles addressing the primary and secondary prevention of intimate partner violence in the health care setting; the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendations on intimate partner violence; and a new compendium of funded research projects on violence against women. Upcoming issues will address: engaging community clinics in violence prevention; evaluating health care-based family violence programs; and technology and family violence.

“We hope that this groundbreaking publication will improve the health, safety and quality of care for survivors of family violence by making it easier for health care providers to intervene and help victims,” said Family Violence Prevention Fund President Esta Soler. “Our new e-journal will offer an unprecedented venue to report on evidence-based as well as exploratory research,” added FVPF Managing Director Debbie Lee. “We think it will fill a niche by showcasing emerging research, the experiences of providers and researchers, and clinical initiatives on family violence.”

The editor of *Family Violence Prevention and Health Practice* is Linda Chamberlain, PhD, MPH. It is funded in part by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families and produced by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, a project of the Family Violence Prevention Fund.

The FVPF runs the nation’s federally funded National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence, which develops educational resources, training materials and model protocols to help health care providers better serve battered women. To view the new journal and subscribe, at no charge, go to <http://endabuse.org/health/ejournal/>.

Workplace Violence Resources Available Online at the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence Web site

Visit www.ncdsv.org for articles, publications and reports available to download.

Nonprofit Advocacy: A Michigan Primer

Organizations often cite myths regarding the legality or consequences of advocacy as reasons not to become involved. This handbook, *Nonprofit Advocacy: A Michigan Primer*, published by the Michigan Nonprofit Association and the Council of Michigan Foundations through the Michigan Public Policy Initiative, is written to dispel these myths and to provide the information needed for nonprofits to engage fully in the public policy arena. Nonprofit involvement in public policy is critical to meeting the missions of the charitable community, ensuring a democratic society and improving the lives of Michigan families. To access this resource, visit www.mnaonline.org/pdf/AdvocacyHandbook.pdf

The Leading 100 New Foundations Funding Women and Girls

The Leading 100 New Foundations Funding Women and Girls co-published by Women and Philanthropy and Jankowski Associates, Inc. includes comprehensive profiles of the top 100 new foundations working at the leading edge of funding for women and girls, across the nation.

These foundations have assets of \$43 billion and grants of more than \$3.1 billion. The guide takes a close look at 100 of the largest new foundations, most working below the radar, and brings ground-breaking research and profiles in women’s and girl’s philanthropy to your desktop.

This new directory includes in-depth profiles on funding programs and projects that affect the lives of women and girls, including contact information, boards of directors, interest areas, and geographic giving patterns. Identify opportunities to engage these new donors as you learn about the funding landscape.

To borrow this resource, contact the Resource Center at (517) 381-4663.

New Print Resource on Sexual Assault

Sexual Abuse in Nine North American Cultures: Treatment and Prevention offers solution-based discussions of how sexual abuse manifests in specific ethnic, racial, and religious groups, and how the cultural norms of such groups can be used to protect children and promote recovery from sexual abuse. It also includes practical guidelines by which medical, legal, and educational professionals can help children, families, and adult survivors of such populations as African Americans, Seventh Day Adventists, Pacific Islanders, Jews, lesbians, and Anglo Americans. To borrow this resource, contact the Resource Center at (517) 381-4663.

New Video Resources

- **The Day You Love Me: El Dia Que Me Quieras**
- **Sisters, Mothers, Daughters**
- **Unlearning Homophobia Series (DVD): Straight from the Heart, All God’s Children, De Colores**
- **Failure to Protect: The Taking of Logan Marr**
- **DADDY & PAPA**
- **Shaking, Hitting, Spanking: What To Do Instead**
- **Judicial Review Hearings in Domestic Violence Cases**
- **Terror at Home: Domestic Violence in America**

Visit us on the Web!



Access the entire Resource Center collection and order materials online at www.mcadsv.org/mrcdsv

The Michigan Resource Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence is a collaboration of the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board and the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

The Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board is the primary funder and owner of the collection. Additional funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other generous supporters of the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

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The Use of Expert Witnesses in Cases Involving Sexual Assault

Based on the widespread and powerful rape myths in society, jurors often have certain expectations about the dynamics of sexual assault, including stereotypes about victims and perpetrators. As described by Estrich (1987), jurors expect the case to fit their stereotype of “real rape,” with a violent rape being perpetrated by a stranger, in a dark alley, using a weapon, and resulting in physical injury. Jurors expect the victim to be extremely emotional or hysterical after the incident and then report it to police immediately. When presented with a case and a victim that do not fit this stereotype, jurors may doubt the credibility of the victim and the veracity of the case. It can therefore be extremely helpful for jurors to have a sexual assault expert explain the realistic dynamics of the crime and common reactions of victims.

The article summarizes existing knowledge on the use of expert witnesses in cases involving sexual assault. The focus is primarily on expert testimony that is provided for the prosecution in a criminal case discussing the general dynamics of sexual assault and common reactions of victims. Ultimately, it is expected that expert witnesses will be used increasingly in cases involving sexual assault and we must proceed carefully to insure that they serve in responsible ways that truly assist both individual victims as well as the criminal and civil court systems. To access a full copy of this article, visit <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/commissioned/svandexpertwitnesses/svandexpertwitnesses.pdf>.

New Resource for Working with Children

Learning to Listen, Learning to Help: Understanding Woman Abuse and its Effects on Children is a new handbook for students and volunteers entering helping professions to prepare them to recognize and respond to families in which there is or was violence at home. Topics include background material on the dynamics of woman abuse, the concept of power and control, and facts and figures on violence against women. It also explains how children are affected by and cope with violence at home and how to respond to child disclosure of abuse and neglect. Information on standards of professional conduct, taking stock of your own attitudes, and suggestions for how you can make a difference to end violence is also provided. Learning to Listen, Learning to Help is available online at <http://www.lfcc.on.ca/learning.html>.

New Forensic Resource

Forensic Nurse: The New Role of the Nurse in Law Enforcement by Serita Stevens describes the many aspects of the forensic nurse’s work. Forensic nurses are trained to know when to bring in law enforcement, how to treat the patient so as to learn the full story, and how to present the findings to doctors and detectives. They learn to recognize possible evidence and preserve it properly. They have particular skills in spotting details that are overlooked by those who are without medical knowledge that is coupled with law. A forensic nurse is skillful with special equipment. They photograph evidence, and may find such evasive clues as nearly invisible marks that an automobile’s bumper leaves on the victim’s clothing, and they know how to question a fearful child to get accurate information. They are also trained to give evidence in a court case, since nurses are almost inevitably called upon as the first witness to see the patient when he or she is brought into the emergency room, a requirement that often terrifies someone without experience or training.

Forensic Nurse is a book that will leave every reader hoping to have this fast-growing medical specialty represented in his or her medical world always on call if and when it is needed. To borrow this resource, contact the Resource Center at (517) 381-4663.

The Day You Love Me

A close-up look at the varieties and complexities of domestic violence, *The Day You Love Me* takes us into the daily life of policewomen and social workers in one of the Police Commissaries for Women and Children in Nicaragua’s capital city of Managua. Women of different ages, as well as children and young adults, visit commissaries seeking help against abusive husbands, lovers and parents. They also talk freely about their experiences and their sometimes conflicting desires for change. The men in their lives come to the station to respond to the charges against them by defending themselves, justifying their actions, arguing their own grievances, or even admitting their wrongs. Actively engaged in the life of the community around the Commissary, the policewomen and social workers demonstrate their responsiveness and skill in dealing with a range of situations and abuses. In the course of documenting their day, this important film records the essential and empowering process that breaks the traditional law of silence aiding and abetting domestic violence in its many forms.

To borrow this resource, contact the Resource Center at (517) 381-4663.