

Remembering the Victims

Governor Mitch Daniels has proclaimed October 2009 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Indiana. The Governor's proclamation serves to remind every Hoosier of the tragic toll the crime of domestic violence takes on innocent individuals every year. This October we mourn those victims who have been lost to violence and at the same time celebrate the beneficial and life saving services offered to survivors by numerous service providers across the state.

The Impact:

Domestic violence affects not only those abused, but witnesses, family members, co-workers, friends, law enforcement officers and our communities. Children who witness domestic violence are victims themselves and growing up amidst violence makes them vulnerable to a myriad of physical and social problems. The constant exposure to violence in the home and abusive role models teaches children that this type of behavior is a normal way of life and places them at risk of becoming our society's next generation of victims and abusers.

Domestic Violence Defined:

Power and control of one individual over another is at the core of domestic violence. The perpetrator desires to dominate the victim/survivor and wants all the power in the relationship and utilizes violence in order to maintain authority and power. Perpetrators of domestic violence learn abusive, manipulative techniques which allow them to dominate their intimate partner to obtain the responses they desire. A perpetrator will often restrict a victim's contacts, forbidding the victim to maintain outside employment, friends and family ties. This has an isolating effect, many times leaving the victim with no support system and creating a dependency on the perpetrator.

The Victim:

Domestic violence victims are often exposed repeatedly to threats, violence, intimidation, physical, emotional and psychological abuse. Constant, repeated exposure to violence has a profound effect on a victim's daily activities and functioning, thinking, interpersonal relationships and sense of self. Other reactions to domestic violence include fear, anxiety, anger, depression, substance abuse, self-blame and low self-esteem. Victims will, in many cases, blame themselves rather than the abuser and will engage in efforts to change their own behavior hoping this will placate the perpetrator. The victims of domestic violence may play down the seriousness of incidents in order to cope with their everyday lives. Victims may be ashamed of their circumstances and end up not revealing the violence to family, friends, co-workers or law enforcement authorities.

Tragic Statistics:

The number of women killed in Indiana as a result of domestic violence from July 2008 to June 2009 was 49. Although the number is down from the 65 the previous year, 49 is still too many for a crime that is 100 percent preventable. The following are statistics gathered from program throughout the state and show an increase in the need and calls for service.

Indiana Domestic Violence Program Statistics

July 1, 2008 – June 20, 2009

Total Deaths: 49

Indiana Domestic Violence Victims Served in Emergency Shelter

Adults - 4,871 / Children - 3887

Out of State Domestic Violence Victims Served in Emergency Shelter –

Adults- 312/Children 226

Total number denied shelter- 2,890

Homeless or inappropriate cases denied - 1,330

Total Number of 24-Hour Shelter Days -143,318

Total Number of Crisis Line Calls – 96,907

These statistics clearly show that access to safety for victims of domestic violence and raising public awareness continue to be significant issues in the state.

Resources:

Victims of domestic violence can take the first step in ending their abuse by calling the state-wide 24-hour **Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-332-7385.**

Renewed Advocacy:

This month advocates across Indiana will again raise awareness about how domestic violence continues to be a serious social problem and finding a solution is our collective responsibility. To view a list of statewide awareness activities during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, visit www.violenceresource.org. A list of brochures and a library listing is also available on the website.