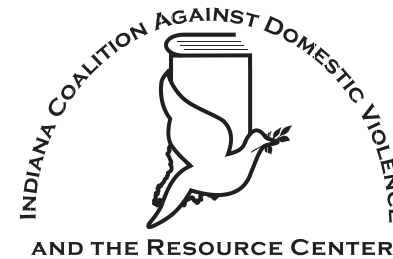


Coalition Connection

Advocacy Issue



Coalition Connection

A biannual newsletter of the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Spring/Summer 2003

Advocacy issue

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Advocacy Leads to Empowerment

By Amy Merritt Wallace, MSW

Throughout my work in the domestic violence community I have had the opportunity to collaborate with many inspiring people. One person in particular stands out in my mind now as I think about the many different ways domestic violence professionals advocate on behalf of our community.

At the time I met Tina she had been out of her abusive relationship for many years. She was struggling to find a way in which she could draw upon her own personal experience with violent relationships and create something positive. She spoke about years of physical, mental and verbal abuse and how this abuse had slowly destroyed everything that had once been important to her. She had lost her friends, her family, her freedom, her sense of self, her monetary possessions; but worst of all she said, was the loss of her voice. After years of hearing how stupid she was, that no one wanted to hear anything she had to say, and that no one would believe her anyway, Tina began telling herself these same things. Tina, not unlike many other victims of domestic violence, had been silent for years.

Now Tina is quick to tell anyone who will listen how hard her shelter staff, therapist,

group members, and advocates of all types worked to support her through her transformation from a victim to a survivor. She credits their efforts for her success and says that they have given her back everything her abuser had taken away. Most importantly she says, "I have my voice back! I am bound and determined to speak up and to be heard." Tina emphatically states that the best gift she received from her advocates was the gift of personal empowerment. She now realizes how powerful her voice and the voices of others can truly be.

After having had a relatively brief conversation with Tina, I can say without a doubt that she is a very effective advocate for our community. Tina's story comes to mind when I think about advocacy because of the lesson she has taught me. The most important thing we as advocates can do is to provide the tools, the know-how, and the opportunity for empowerment to another person.

ADVOCATE

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From the Director



Pictured above from left to right: Laura Berry Berman, Cynthia Lanane, Beth Willhouse, Harriet Clare, Amy Merritt Wallace & Lynne Arrowsmith

Welcome to the Spring and Summer edition of the Coalition Connection. In this issue you will find very useful and important information about all forms of advocacy. As a provider of domestic violence services, the key to effectiveness is advocacy whether it is legal, personal or systemic.

What is advocacy? Advocacy is something different for everyone. It can be as simple as listening to a woman and affirming her feelings and beliefs. Or, it can be as extensive as pleading or arguing in favor of a cause, idea or policy that supports our mission and philosophy. However you define advocacy, it is crucial that it is done appropriately and effectively.

In this issue, you will find articles from professionals in the field of domestic violence that will help you define and understand advocacy better, understand how to effectively advocate on behalf of women and children, and how advocacy can be the key to overcoming barriers that women face when separating from a violent relationship.

This issue of Coalition Connection is an important resource for you as a provider of domestic violence services to maintain. Keep it accessible so that you can refer to specific articles or issues and share it with colleagues and others who work with women and children, or in systems that can effect policy change.

I hope you enjoy this issue and find it useful in your work.

In peace,

it may combine with other counties to form a regional domestic violence fatality review team; or it may choose to do nothing as far as investigating domestic violence fatalities. If a fatality review team is established, it must operate in conjunction with a local domestic violence shelter; domestic violence programs; or a domestic violence coordinated community response team.

The county legislative body must adopt ordinances for the appointment and reappointment of members. Teams must consist of a minimum of 8 members which include the following individuals: 1) a survivor of domestic violence; 2) a domestic violence direct service provider; 3) a representative of law-enforcement from the area; 4) the prosecuting attorney or designee from the area; 5) an expert in the field of forensic pathology; 6) a medical practitioner with expertise in domestic violence; 7) a judge who hears civil or criminal cases; 8) an employee of the child protective services agency. The maximum number of members is 15; the additional members must come from the following categories: 1) a clergy members; 2) a representative of county government; 3) a representative from a county health department 4) a representative from the local Bar Association; 5) a defense attorney; 6) an educator; 7) a probation officer; 8) a representative from the business community; 9) animal control officer; 10) an attorney who represents victims of domestic violence; 11) a provider of the batterers' intervention program. A chairperson is elected at the first meeting of the team and annually thereafter; any member of the team may serve as the chairperson. The meetings of a fatality review team are generally open to the public; however, meetings that involve confidential records or identifying information regarding a death are to be held as executive sessions and the public is excluded from those sessions.

The deaths which may be reviewed by the local teams are those in which the person who caused the death is charged and convicted of a criminal offense, or, commits suicide in a way that is related in time, place, and circumstance to the death of the victim. The required duties of a domestic violence fatality review team as described in IC 12-18-8-7 are: assist local agencies to identify and review homicides or suicides; develop recommendations for community prevention and intervention strategies; collect data relating to these deaths. The team has the option of developing a protocol to be used by the person who performs autopsies to properly identify the deceased as the victim of domestic violence and to prepare appropriate reports for these deaths.

Due to the diverse makeup of the teams, almost any organization or individual who has an interest in advocating for the elimination of domestic violence could be involved with a domestic violence fatality review team. The annual report published by ICADV could be used as a major tool for advocacy. Since the findings will reflect the issues and needs of individual counties or regions, solutions can be tailored to those areas. Some of the needs and solutions identified by local teams in other states include: enforcement of current laws; creation of new laws; education programs for prosecutors, attorneys, judges and coroners to improve the responsiveness of our court systems; additional funding to provide services so victims may safely escape from abuse; and general public awareness. Of course, it will also be necessary to advocate for the formation of such teams in your communities.



Advocating for Children

By Bridgett Morales
Communications Coordinator
Children's Bureau, Inc.

Advocating for children, our most vulnerable citizens, is a process where the solutions are not clear and the process has to be multi-dimensional. So how do we begin advocating for children and their families? It begins with a belief system to strengthen families and create a safe environment for every child. This includes biological families, but can also mean families brought together for genuine love and concern for a child, including a group of friends, adoptive and foster families. Not only does advocating start with serving the needs of the family but also includes the community, which plays an integral part in creating a healthy environment for children.

To begin, advocacy starts with a belief system. When advocating for children, we must work towards the goal that every child needs to be safe, happy and healthy. Every child deserves a healthy family. Every child needs to feel love. For us to obtain that, we must advocate for children on every level, such as others' belief systems, health care, safety issues, family issues, and of course, legislative issues, to name a few. This is not to say that the solutions to the problems that we meet when working with children and families are easy or clear, just that we must still continue to strive to serve in the best needs of each individual child.

Serving the needs of children is not a task that we should do alone. Many organizations were built on the premise of helping children. Each organization and person is a part of the process. Although at times it feels as if we have to "compete" with other agencies for funding, we must recognize that we need to work together towards a common goal. Network, share, collaborate; it is all for the same goal.

And we must talk about our successes and even our failures. We must tell the stories of the atrocities that happen to our children. With that in mind, we need to accept disappointment at times, and not let it beat us down; but to get up smarter, stronger and more determined. We need to tell our children's stories.

You are the one who knows what is happening and thus, you must advocate for need of children. And this is where legislative advocacy comes in. Legislators need you to talk to them. Many people are extremely intimidated to speak with city council members, state and federal legislators. But you must. You are the experts that they need to know. They need to hear the stories that only you can tell so that they can do what is best for the children. And as their constituent, you need to use your influence to help them do what is right.

When advocating for children, it is best to remember the six R's.

- Review the needs of children.
- Reach out to others in your community.
- Reflect on successes and failures.
- Respect the power of your own influence.
- Receive input from clients and other reliable sources.
- Remember that you can make a difference in children's and families' lives.



Advocacy in Retrospect

by Lynne Arrowsmith

A new type of advocacy will be added when House Bill 1431 goes into effect on July 1, 2003. This bill allows a county or a region to establish a domestic violence fatality review team. Although we usually think of advocating as a prospective activity, domestic violence fatality review teams could give us a totally different opportunity to advocate—advocacy through retrospection. Although deceased victims can no longer be assisted, the findings of a fatality review team can be used to prevent more fatalities resulting from domestic violence.

House Bill 1431 creates a new chapter in the Indiana code, IC 12-18-8. Sections IC 12-18-8-1 through IC 12-18-8-5 define many of the terms used in this new chapter. Starting with IC 12-18-8-6, the establishment, duties, and structure of a domestic violence fatality review team are described. The legislative body of each county has three choices: it may create a county domestic violence fatality review team;

What is the role of a Legal Advocate?

By: Amy Huffman Oliver, J.D.
Director of Legal Services
Turning Point Domestic Violence Services
Columbus, Indiana

Every domestic violence advocate encounters legal issues and questions when talking with clients. Sometimes the questions are very basic. Sometimes they are extremely complex. Clients come to us with lists of myths and misinformation about the legal process that they gained from their batterer. This misinformation often keeps victims in relationships longer because they are convinced no judge will believe them or they have no legal right to keep their children. So just giving victims accurate legal information can be very empowering as victims leave an abusive relationship.

While some programs have advocates who specialize in legal issues, every advocate on staff should have a basic understanding of common legal questions that come to the crisis line or from clients.

These are some of the most common forms of legal assistance that both program advocates and legal advocates can provide without being a licensed attorney:

- 1. Orders of Protection:** Now that we have statewide Petitions for Orders of Protection (see www.in.gov/judiciary/form/po.html for forms and orders), every advocate should know where these forms are kept and be familiar enough with them to walk a client through what needs to be included. Basic assistance with filling out Orders of Protection or other pro se forms is not technically the practice of law and should be encouraged to make sure our clients write enough information for the judge to understand the gravity of their situation. Advocates should also be able to explain what an order of protection can and cannot do, when a hearing will be needed, and what happens at a Protective Order hearing.

- 2. Accompanying a Client to Court:** Clients frequently need a support person to accompany them to court. Advocates should make sure they know what the exact purpose of the hearing will be and prepare the client accordingly. Judges frequently won't listen to a long story when the purpose of the hearing is very narrow. Advise clients on basic courtroom etiquette beforehand, sit with them while waiting for the hearing to start, and then stay in the background during the actual hearing. (Although some courts may allow advocates to sit at counsel table with the client, many will not. Ask the judge's permission before the hearing so there are no misunderstandings.) Finally, use all your senses to keep the client safe while at the courthouse. Try to keep the client in a location that is physically separate from the abuser until the hearing begins, but don't forget to tell the court staff where she will be so they don't think she's failed to appear. Be prepared to be a witness if there is any negative contact or threats while at the courthouse. Don't be shy about asking for staff or police assistance if you sense danger.

- 3. Understanding Civil and Criminal Orders:** Many clients do not fully understand their orders issued in divorce or criminal cases. Advocates can assist clients in reading and understanding what a court has ordered and should have a copy of the Indiana Parenting Time Guidelines handy for standard visitation questions. Advocates should know what some common legal options may be for enforcement of an order, but also recognize that many of these options may require attorney representation. Advocates should not give legal advice to clients about exactly what they should or should not do without direction from an attorney.
- 4. Access to Pro Se Forms:** Many times clients can use standard pro se forms to file on their own for contempt, continuance, child support modification or divorce. The Indiana Supreme Court recently adopted easy to understand, fill-in-the-blank forms that all Indiana courts accept. These are available at www.in.gov/judiciary/selfservice/index.html. Advocates can offer these forms and assist with filling them out, but only if the client has decided to proceed without counsel.

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5. Attorney Referral: All advocates should know the local pro bono attorney services in their area. Advocates should also be familiar with the agency's eligibility criteria, intake procedures, average wait time, and emergency intake availability. For clients who don't qualify, advocates should be familiar with area attorneys who have been sensitive to our clients' needs in the past and might be willing to assist in a particular case at a free or reduced rate or on a temporary basis.

6. Relationships: Legal advocates also help clients by having positive and regular contact with local police, prosecutor, court, and child support staffs and knowing the local bar and legal resources available.

7. Other Services: Some legal advocacy programs are able to provide additional services for the agency and the client including court monitoring, attending attorney appointments with clients, DV divorce counseling, legal training, or actual legal representation.

While some programs have advocates who specialize in legal issues, every advocate on staff should have a basic understanding of common legal questions that come to the crisis line



Rural Advocacy



by Terri Noone, Outreach Coordinator
YWCA Domestic Violence Services, Fort Wayne, IN

Eight of the nine counties our program serves are considered rural. Providing non-residential services to victims of domestic violence in any county is a challenge, but advocates working in rural counties have additional barriers to face. Each county has a unique culture that advocates must learn in order to provide comprehensive services. Our advocates spend quite a bit of time networking with other service providers and law enforcement agencies in these counties. Getting to know each other builds communication, trust and cooperation, all of which are vital to coordinating services for victims. Our advocates also value these relationships because of the isolation they can experience on the job.

An enormous barrier for victims in rural counties is a lack of resources. We tend to take for granted the number of resources available to us in larger communities. In larger communities, affordable housing options, educational opportunities, childcare, etc. are limited; in rural communities they are almost nonexistent. Very few, if any, rural communities offer any form of public transportation, making it difficult for victims to get to essential appointments.

Relocation is an option many victims won't even consider. They have usually grown up in the same town they currently live in. They have strong family, social, and religious ties to the community. These same ties also make it more difficult for a victim to leave an abusive relationship. The abuser has the same ties to the family and friends and this group often encourages the couple to stay together. Even people who are not in the couple's immediate circle seem to find out about the violence in the relationship.

Not only do the rural communities have small police departments, they also have a large region to cover. This leads to increased response time from law enforcement to emergency calls. The response time may be further increased if the responding officer must wait for back-up assistance from another

Advocacy

Carole Sousa

Advocacy Is...

Providing a woman a safe space within which she can be in crisis

Listening

Asking a woman what she wants to work on

Respecting her limits

Providing resources and referral information

Asking if she needs help

Encouraging her to help herself and her children

Recognizing her inner strength and pointing it out to her

Helping her draw on that strength

Complementing her for hard work

Calling agencies on a woman's behalf when she requests your help

Being honest

Empathizing with her

Recognizing that each woman reacts differently to crisis

Focusing, clarifying, being honest, real, and present

Having a support system for yourself

Advocacy Isn't...

Forgetting that the woman is in crisis

Telling a woman what she should be feeling

Telling a woman what she must work on

Rescuing a woman and encouraging her to feel dependent on you

Thinking you can protect a woman

Encouraging her to think of herself only as a victim

Thinking you'll be the influence that changes her life

Pressing a woman to deal with issues she is not ready to confront

Getting frustrated because things are not moving as fast as you would like

Calling agencies for a woman when she has not asked for help

Not sharing with her what you feel about her situation

Telling her how much worse you had it

Thinking that her reactions are inappropriate

Not paying attention

Believing you are a super hero

— continued from previous page

have the experience of working with the Hispanic community. Educational programs conducted in Spanish such as Child Abuse Prevention and Education help this needy population access other much-needed health related services. Since there is no “barrio” or one central location where Hispanics live in Indianapolis, this type of outreach program is crucial in getting the word out.

Ultimately an advocate is a person who cares.

A Directory of Indiana Legal Services

Indiana Legal Services, Inc. (ILS) Hotline

Curry Building, Second Floor
252 W. 7th Street, Bloomington, IN 47401
Voice: 812-335-2610, ext. 204-211
Toll Free: 877-323-6260
Toll Free fax 866-295-5425

The Hotline serves as the front door of Indiana Legal Services, taking initial applications for many of the branch offices in Indiana.

To apply for legal services, please call the Hotline at our toll free number, 877-323-6260, during our intake hours: Mon. 10 am-12 noon; Tue. 5 pm-7 pm; Wed. 10 am-12 noon; Eastern Standard time. If you have a hearing or a deadline within the next ten days, please call us anytime M-Th 10 am-7 pm or Fri., 10 am-4 pm.

ILS, Bloomington

Curry Building, Second Floor
242 W. Seventh St., Bloomington, IN 47401
Voice: 812-339-7668
Toll Free: 800-822-4774
Fax: 812-339-2081

ILS, Columbus

Senior Law Project
PO Box 904, Columbus, IN 47202
Voice: 812-372-6918
Fax: 812-372-7846

ILS, Evansville

101 Court St., Suite 101, Evansville IN 47708
Voice: 812-426-1295
Toll Free 800-852-3477
Fax: 812-422-7332
E-mail: legalaid@vanderburghgov.org

Legal Services of Maumee Valley-Ft. Wayne

203 W. Wayne St. Suite 410
Fort Wayne, IN 46802
Voice: 260-422-8070
Toll Free: 800-552-4884
Fax: 260-422-7915

ILS, Hispanic Law Center

See Bloomington Hotline information

ILS, Gary

504 Broadway, Suite 301
Gary, IN 46402
Voice: 219-886-5142
Voice: 219-374-7125
Fax: 219-886-5143

ILS, Indianapolis

Market Square Center, Suite 1800
151 N. Delaware St., Indianapolis, IN 46204
Voice: 317-631-9410
Fax: 317-631-9775

ILS, Senior Law Project

See Indianapolis information

ILS, Homeless Legal Project

See Indianapolis information

ILS, Migrant Farmworker Project

See Indianapolis information

ILS, Lafayette

639 Columbia St., PO Box 1455
Lafayette, IN 47902
Voice: 765-423-5327
Toll Free: 800-382-7581
Fax: 765-423-2252

ILS New Albany

3303 Plaza Dr., Ste. 5, New Albany, IN 47150
Voice: 812-945-4123
Toll Free: 800-382-7581
Fax: 765-423-2252

ILS, Richmond

Voice: 765-965-3920
Richmond Senior Law Project
Voice: 765-939-8895

ILS, South Bend

105 E. Jefferson, Blvd., Ste. 600, So. Bend, 46601
Voice: 574-234-8121
Toll Free: 800-288-8121
Fax: 574-239-2185

ILS Terre Haute Senior Law Project

321 Ohio St., Terre Haute, IN 47807
Voice: 812-234-0753
Fax: 812-232-3232

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department in a neighboring town for safety reasons.

Even with the additional barriers victims in rural communities face there is a definite upside. Rural communities are able to establish and sustain a coordinated community response with more ease than their urban counterparts. Agencies, law enforcement, and citizens tend to get more involved in issues important to the quality of life in their own town. Services have a personal touch that is hard to find in more urban areas. What rural communities lack in quantity of services, they more than make up for with quality and that’s what can make all the difference to a victim of domestic violence.



Policy Reminder

Effective January 7, 2002, a new policy was mailed to all providers regarding changes implemented by FSSA in claims processes. The policy number: FSSA-AD1-8 (Rev. Dec.2001) was written to establish a policy regarding issuance and repayment of advances, to ensure claims were submitted in a timely manner, to ensure that closeout reports were reconciled, and to ensure all funds not expended were properly returned.

All Housing subgrantees should be alert to this policy because many claims are being received past the specified allowable time limits from incurred expenses. All claims received past 60 days after the date costs were incurred are now being denied by the claims management and are being returned. This causes a delay in the payment. In addition, future claims may be denied if received late. All agencies should file monthly claims and all claims should be submitted within sixty (60) days after the date costs are incurred. Contact your program consultant or claims department to get a copy of the written policy. There are six policies within this document; the policy pertaining to timely claims reads:

“Unless otherwise specified in the contract, all claims must be submitted to FSSA within 60 days after the date the costs are incurred or FSSA shall deny payment.”

RESOURCES ON ADVOCACY

The Resource Center has a wealth of materials for advocates who work with domestic violence victims. In addition to many videos and books, there are several curricula available for use with children, law enforcement personnel, health care providers, and others. These materials may be used in the library, borrowed, or in some cases, copies may be made. Here is a sample listing of available resources for advocates:

BOOKS

- Good Practice in Working with Victims of Violence... Kemshall
- Groupwork with Children of Battered Women.....Peled
- Working with Battered Immigrant Women.....Volpp
- Domestic Violence in Rural America.....FloridaCADV
- Domestic Violence Sourcebook.....Berry
- Issues in Intimate Violence.....Bergen

VIDEOS

- Survivors
- Defending Our Lives
- The Children are Watching
- Men and Domestic Violence
- Domestic Violence and Young Adults

CURRICULA

- Children’s Domestic Abuse Program
- Violence in the Family: a Curriculum for Clergy
- Domestic Violence: A Guide for Health Care Providers

This is only a partial list of our resources. Please visit The Resource Center to see the rest of our materials. If you have questions, requests or need information, please call Harriet at 317-917-3685 or 800-538-3393.

This is a resource for you!

Advocating for Yourself

By Jennie Billings

Victims of domestic violence often feel their situation is hopeless and there is nothing they can do to change it. They often feel no one knows what they are going through or how they feel. To become a survivor of domestic violence, a woman/man has to begin to advocate for her/himself. There are many ways in which she/he can start to make changes. Just admitting to oneself that this is not a safe and healthy way to live is the first step.

Sometimes the safest thing is not to leave the relationship at the very moment when the decision has been made to end the relationship. There are many steps a person might want to think about and put into place before actually leaving the abusive relationship. First, make a safety plan. This would include knowing where to go once the person has left, such as a shelter or a friend or relative's home. Remember that the abuser might try to find you, so choose where you go very carefully. A person can start a bank account of her/his own and start saving money so that she/he is not left completely destitute when she/he does leave. Gather important papers, such as birth certificates, marriage license, or any legal documents. Hide a bag with clothing and medications. Have an extra set of keys to the car and/or house made and hide them so they are available when the person is ready to leave. While this plan is being implemented, if a neighbor can be trusted, come up with a signal that would alert the neighbor that there is danger and to call the police.

Personal advocacy comes in many forms. Often this can mean admitting that she/he needs help and turning to the professionals. Sometimes individuals have such low self-esteem because of the abuse; they do not believe they possess the strength and ability to help themselves. There are many ways professionals advocate for victims, but ultimately the person has to be the one to make the changes. A person can go into a domestic violence shelter, attend educational or support groups on a variety of subjects or begin individual counseling. There are agencies that are devoted to helping victims with whatever they may need. The professionals in the legal system also are there to help domestic violence victims. They will help obtain protective orders, a legal separation, custody orders, or a divorce. The victim may also want to file a complaint with the Prosecutor's Office, who may then bring charges against her/his abuser.

The ultimate act of personal advocacy that a person may be faced with is to have to relocate to another state. She/he may have to leave everyone and everything behind. This could include family and friends, belongings, a job and quite possibly the only support system she/he may have had. This may be the only way to stay safe and to keep the family safe. It is important to remember that domestic violence victims do not have to stay in the victim role, they can be survivors and they often times are their own best advocate.

RESOURCES for VICTIMS of OFFICER-INVOLVED DOMESTIC CRIMES from BATTERED WOMEN'S JUSTICE PROJECT

Information & Support for Victims

Victims can call the toll free number, 1-800-903-0111, ext. 1, to reach Diane Wetendorf of BWJP. All victims will receive immediate crisis assistance. There is also a website for victims at: www.abuseofpower.info.

Consultation and Training

Diane will provide technical assistance to advocates, counselors, police officers and all other interested professionals about how to respond effectively in an individual case. She will be available to conduct trainings, teleconferences or workshops on all issues related to advocacy for victims, such as the unique dynamics due to the abuser's professional status; victim safety and the impact of standard victim remedies on an officer's career; holding the batterer accountable; the victim's right to equal protection; information of firearm possession laws; batterer's manipulation of the system; and the victim's role in internal investigations. Her workshops will include discussion on how to approach and collaborate with local law agencies on officer-involved domestic violence cases, encouraging advocacy programs to take a proactive stance to avoid having to hold initial discussions of this issue in the midst of a crisis. She will also consult on the development of departmental policies on officer-involved domestic crimes.

Educational Materials

All written materials and training curricula developed for this project, including, *The Misuse of Police Powers in Officer Involved Domestic Violence*, by Diane Wetendorf and our own Dottie Davis, will be available on the BWJP website: www.bwjp.org. The report is available in The Resource Center.

What is an Advocate for a Community

by Jocelyn Gonzalez,
Child Abuse Prevention Coordinator,
Wishard Hispanic Health Project

Although we live in an urban area in Indianapolis, the problems we suffer are likely duplicated in other communities. One characteristic of human beings is to be emotional. This is a good thing, however, at times emotions can lead to poor communication. With a language barrier, this is compounded. It becomes easier to assume something and therefore, to miss the true problem. Instead, a band-aid approach is taken that only solves a surface issue rather than digging deeper for the true cause.

This is a reality for Hispanic immigrant families, the population that is served by the Hispanic Health Project at Wishard Health Services. Immigrants suffer from emotional strain, economic hardship from unemployment or underemployment, isolation and a feeling of loneliness due to language and cultural barriers. This puts them at risk of social and psychological disintegration in the future.

"The rapid influx of Hispanics/Latinos into the State of Indiana over the last decade has served as a challenge to many public safety, social service, medical institutions and agencies. A factor in minority health disparities is the lack of primary and preventive health care. One of the primary goals must be to increase the participation of Hispanics/Latinos in the primary and preventive care network currently existing in Indianapolis" - Governor Frank O'Bannon's report from the Indiana Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs, March 2002.

Working in social services and helping people obtain the basic necessities for life including food, shelter, jobs and health care, requires an advocate to perform many roles. Often, people approach us with one problem that is only the tip of the iceberg. In social services, we have to take it one step further by assisting people with more than our particular programs. We must be available with our time and knowledge to assist with difficulties across the board. If we do not have direct know-

ledge of resources to assist with the larger problem, an advocate must take the time to research resources for the person.

What are we hearing? What are their problems? When we work in public service, it is possible to hear anything. Immigrants are facing problems that we all face, however, they are often at a disadvantage. In their countries, they would know where to go to access resources to solve them. They also have a working knowledge of the systems. However, being in a foreign country, they are at a loss. Things we take for granted on a daily basis (using the phone, using the yellow pages, knowing how to call the police or fire department, etc.), become monumental tasks for someone who does not know the language or our systems. Advocates must be prepared to step into larger roles to expand the horizons of the people they serve by providing education and resources.

Being an advocate for the Hispanic community is not just being an interpreter and being a bridge for communication between the two sides. An advocate must be culturally competent and understand the idiosyncrasies of the people with whom he or she is working. An advocate must be nondiscriminatory, without preferences for any person, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, religion or background. An advocate may serve as a coach, a counselor in matters of the heart, a tour guide, a yellow page representative, a priest, a customer service representative, a detective, a godfather or godmother, a librarian, a legal counselor or a marketing/public relations representative.

One way I can compare people's experiences living in a foreign country is with the old TV show "Twilight Zone" or "La Dimension Desconocida." You are there but your experience is quite different than you imagined it would be. Sometimes you know when it is real and sometimes you become amazed, confused, defeated, embarrassed and rejected.

The Hispanic population served at Wishard Health Services is filled with the many newcomers to the United States. Employees of the Hispanic Health Project, in existence since 1995, speak the language, understand the culture and

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