

# MASSACHUSETTS

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

The state report is a resource to inform donors and funders about the local context of social issues affecting at-risk populations. This report can be used to better understand the social and economic situation in which the issue exists, as well as statewide initiatives and trends in private and government funding directed

to address the issue. This state level research complements the related social issue report that provides an overview of the issue and approaches to address it and the guide to giving that provides criteria to evaluate organizations working to address the issue.

## FACTS: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN MASSACHUSETTS

The National Network to End Domestic Violence annually conducts a survey of domestic violence programs to measure the scope of services requested in a single day.

On September 15, 2010, all 55 domestic violence shelters in Massachusetts participated. **They reported that:**<sup>1</sup>



**2,564** Total number of domestic violence victims who requested services

**1,798** Victims whose requests for services were met

**766** Victims whose requests for services were not met

### SOCIAL ISSUE INDICATORS

SIR emphasizes the importance of data collection and outcome tracking to gauge progress on a given social issue. In the case of addressing domestic violence, current indicators are insufficient due to the difficulty of establishing a direct cause and effect relationship between the variables. For example, an increase in the number of domestic violence incidents that are reported is often used as an indicator of progress on assisting victims. However, external forces render this indicator ineffective.

- The data (domestic violence incidents) is chronically underreported or even unreported because of shame, social taboos, and fear of further abuse.
- An increase in the number of women who report domestic violence annually could represent two possible scenarios: more women are reporting violence because of increased community awareness and support, or abuse incidents are increasing. It is difficult to tell with accuracy which of these factors is affecting the indicator and to what degree.
- The indicator places the inference of blame on the victim by suggesting that violence can be ended by leaving. The empowerment approach, whose goal is to encourage and support victims, is built upon post-victimization assistance and risk minimization through education, knowledge, and counseling. The goal of these services is not to end the violence perpetrated against victims, but to provide assistance and adequate services.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MASSACHUSETTS

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Recognizing the urgency of adequately addressing domestic violence in Massachusetts, Governor Deval Patrick issued the 486th Executive Order in June 2007 that established the Governor's Council to Address Sexual and Domestic Violence (the Council). The goal of the Council is to develop and implement innovative practices to effectively address domestic violence and protect its victims.<sup>2</sup> The underlying principles behind the development of these practices are community awareness, advocacy, and cross-sectoral collaboration.

The first initiatives of the Council were to devise a set of consistent reporting guidelines, update the State's Policy for Law Enforcement Response to Domestic Violence, and create policy initiatives to ensure uniform and collaborative response by various actors.<sup>3</sup> In February 2009, the Council's Systems Change and Integration Committee was tasked with identifying and recommending systems level opportunities to ensure that people facing multiple issues related to domestic violence are well served by the government.<sup>4</sup>

One example of a system level change driven by the Council was an increased understanding of the connection between homelessness and domestic violence. A group with members from the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness and the Council is working to create a model to assist homeless domestic violence victims. The model calls for an integrated system in which organizations collaborate and work in partnerships to effectively assist victims to meet all their needs.<sup>5</sup>

### COMMUNITY RESPONSE

A community driven innovation to collaboratively address domestic violence is the formation of Community Coordinated Response Teams (CCRTs). CCRTs are efforts to prevent and respond to domestic violence within a community. They institute a consistent response by reducing service overlap while increasing victim service, and are typically led by local nonprofits. These nonprofits dedicate staff hours toward administrative and programmatic duties and coordinate the work of various partners,

including government, community organizations, service providers, educational institutions, and religious institutions. CCRTs also strengthen and increase responsiveness to domestic violence through their emphasis on shared vision and public accountability.<sup>6</sup> Often, these collaborative efforts bridge the cross-sectoral gap by strengthening and increasing knowledge sharing and dissemination.

Below are some examples of CCRTs:<sup>7</sup>

- Led by YWCA of Central Massachusetts/Daybreak, the City of Worcester has a 23-member Coordinated Community Response Network. This body is united by formal contractual agreement, and seeks to identify gaps in services and develop recommendations for systemic change.
- Led by Plymouth County District Attorney’s Office, the 27 towns in Plymouth County have created a CCRT to increase knowledge and education by coordinating a consistent response from all partners working with domestic violence victims. Their mission is to increase knowledge and education throughout the community on domestic violence.
- Led by the Northwestern District Attorney’s office, the Domestic Violence Intervention Project seeks to demonstrate

how law enforcement and advocacy agencies can work collaboratively and communicate on behalf of victims to provide immediate support to them.

- Created in 1998, the Cape and Islands Regional Domestic Violence Council works to promote social change through leadership and advocacy in partnership with the Cape Cod community.

Community mobilization, spearheaded by local nonprofits, seeks to lessen the stigma around domestic violence by increasing civic discourse and engagement and implementing approaches that are tailored to specific communities. Nonprofits, working on behalf of communities, have a unique opportunity to reframe the issue of domestic violence from a private problem to a community-wide issue. The government, recognizing this vital role that local organizations play within communities, is developing ways in which it can work with the nonprofit sector to promote examples of social innovation and commitment in helping victims of domestic violence. As one example of an innovative approach to address domestic violence, community mobilization offers a unique opportunity to not only expand the number but also the diversity of stakeholders who are addressing domestic violence.<sup>8</sup>

## REFERENCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

ORGANIZATION	WEBSITE
EMERGE	<a href="http://www.emergedv.com">www.emergedv.com</a>
Jane Doe, Inc. (Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence)	<a href="http://www.janedoe.org">www.janedoe.org</a>
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence	<a href="http://www.ncadv.org">www.ncadv.org</a>
National Network to End Domestic Violence	<a href="http://www.nnedv.org">www.nnedv.org</a>
REACH	<a href="http://www.reachma.org">www.reachma.org</a>

## ABOUT SOCIAL IMPACT RESEARCH

Social Impact Research (SIR) is the independent research department of Root Cause, a research and consulting firm dedicated to mobilizing the nonprofit, public, and business sectors to work collaboratively in a new social impact market. Modeled after private sector equity research firms, SIR conducts

research on social issues and independent analysis of program performance to provide leaders and funders with the rigorous, actionable information they need to make strategic decisions about creating and investing in social impact.

## ENDNOTES

1. National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2010 Domestic Violence Counts: A 24-Hour Census of Domestic Violence Shelters and Services, Massachusetts State Summary, September 15, 2010.
2. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Department, Executive Order No. 486: Establishing the Governor’s Council to Address Sexual and Domestic Violence (Boston, MA, June 2007), 3.
3. Ibid.
4. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Governor’s Council to Address Sexual and Domestic Violence, Systems Change and Integration Committee, Blueprint Report, Domestic Violence (Boston, MA, August 2009).
5. Ibid.
6. Promising Practices Network, Everyone Has a Role: A Report to the Governor’s Council to Address Sexual and Domestic Violence (MA, March 2009).
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.