

The River



Spring 2007

A Publication of the Texas Council on Family Violence

Leading Efforts to End Domestic Violence for 29 Years

TCFV Undergoes Organizational Transformation

Since 1978, TCFV has been working to make Texas a safer place for families. However, in the Spring of 2005, in an effort to continue to cope and thrive in a rapidly changing social and political landscape, the coalition began evaluating a massive transformation plan.

New Mission Statement

The Texas Council on Family Violence promotes safe and healthy relationships by supporting service providers, facilitating strategic prevention efforts, and creating opportunities for freedom from domestic violence.

The driving force behind the transformation is the vision of creating greater access to resources for women, children and families and having greater impact on their lives. To achieve these goals TCFV evaluated current programs and initiatives, and in conjunction with constituents' feedback, identified opportunities to more effectively focus our efforts in supporting service providers statewide.

Drawing from this extensive feedback, it was clear that it has become crucial for TCFV to ensure that its scarce

resources are focused on meeting the needs of its constituents, in addition to supporting the mission of the agency. Additionally, TCFV needed a new agency structure to effectively meet the evolving needs of domestic violence victims, family violence programs and other secondary constituents.

What this means for family violence service providers and members of TCFV is:

- Quality Services that meet your needs and the needs of those you serve.
- More focus on statewide issues that directly affect you as members and programs.
- More engagement and support.

To facilitate this strategy the council has been divided into three strategic focus areas: Support to Service Providers, Social Safety Nets (Policy) and Prevention.

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The 80th Texas Legislature

Ana Rodriguez, TCFV Policy Analyst &
Rajani Ramachandran, TCFV Staff Writer

The Texas Legislature is in session, and TCFV is at the Capitol making sure the needs of family violence advocates and programs across the state are represented. At this point all of TCFV's priority items to the 80th Texas Legislature have been referred to committees and many have received hearings or are scheduled for hearings in the coming weeks. TCFV will continue to call on local domestic violence programs, allied groups, advocates and survivors to provide testimony and support during this legislative session. This is a collective effort and we are very grateful for those who have participated in the process alongside TCFV's Policy Team!

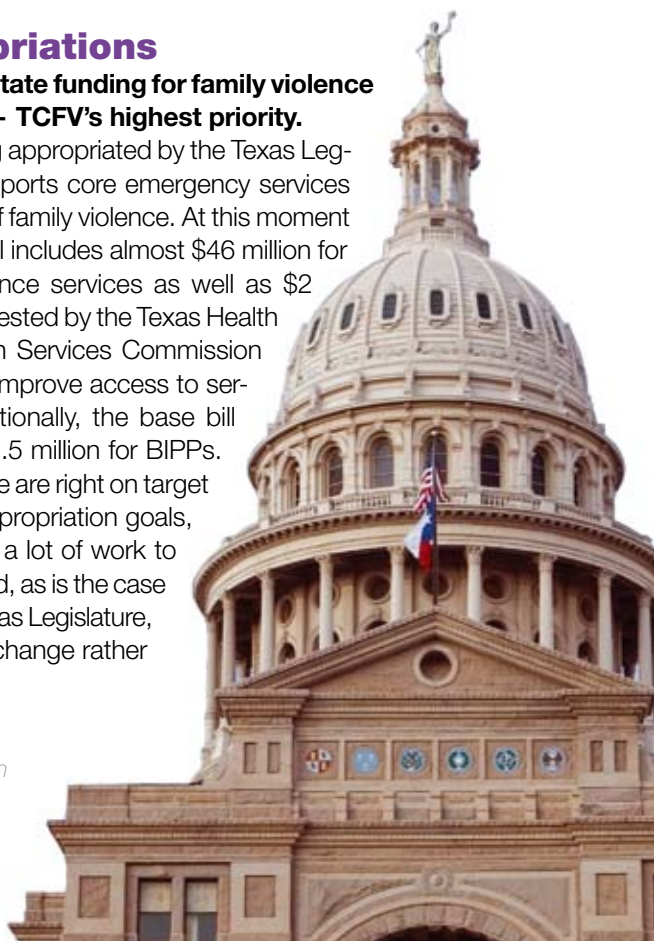
The TCFV board adopted the following five items to focus on during the 80th legislative session.

Appropriations

Preserve state funding for family violence services – TCFV's highest priority.

The funding appropriated by the Texas Legislature supports core emergency services to victims of family violence. At this moment the base bill includes almost \$46 million for family violence services as well as \$2 million requested by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to improve access to services. Additionally, the base bill includes \$2.5 million for BIPPs. Although we are right on target with our appropriation goals, there is still a lot of work to be done and, as is the case with the Texas Legislature, much can change rather quickly.

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From the CEO

I know that you are all interested in hearing about the recent changes at TCFV. We have spent a great deal of time and effort on evaluating how we can best serve our constituents and work together to make Texas safe for families. After receiving constituent surveys and extensive feedback, TCFV responded by focusing on efforts in three strategic areas: Prevention, Support to Service Providers and Policy. You can learn more about our new focus areas and how it impacts your program in our cover story or by visiting our website, www.tcfv.org/transformation.



I'm also pleased to announce the hiring of our new coalition president, Pam Wessel. Pam has 21 years of experience in the movement, including her recent tenure as Executive Director of the Advocacy Center for Crime Victims and Children in Waco, service on the Legislative committee for the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault and many other positions in our work. We are excited to welcome her to TCFV.

As I'm sure you know, the Texas Legislature is in session, so TCFV is keeping a close watch on the Capitol to ensure that the interests of family violence programs across the state are represented and protected. This includes efforts to maintain current levels of funding, an accreditation program for battering intervention and prevention programs and much more.

Finally, we are excited to announce a statewide media tour for our Red Flags teen dating violence awareness campaign. TCFV will be partnering with local shelters to reach out to local print, television and radio media. A full list of cities we'll be visiting can be found on page 6 of this issue.

I want to close by thanking you for all the work that you do. TCFV exists to serve the needs of fellow members of the movement across the state, and we hope that as we emerge from our organizational transformation, we will be able to work more effectively together to make Texas a safer place.

Donations

TCFV would like to thank the following organizations for their generous support.

American Express Philanthropic Program

The Safeway Foundation

Ms. Foundation for Women

Altria Group

The Body Shop

The Allstate Foundation

The Brown Foundation

Higgenbotham & Associates

Chubb Federal Insurance

Victory Pest Control

Texas Council On FAMILY VIOLENCE

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The Texas Council on Family Violence works to end domestic violence through public education, partnerships, advocacy and direct services.

TCFV operates the National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH), providing crisis intervention, referrals to local service providers and support to victims of domestic violence across the nation 24 hours a day. The toll-free numbers are:

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
1-800-787-3224 (TTY for the Deaf).
For more information visit our websites:
www.tcfv.org and www.ndvh.org

TCFV's Transformation

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Support to Service Providers

The new Support to Service Providers Team offers technical assistance and training to domestic violence service providers throughout the state in order to ensure that they have the capacity to provide quality services to meet their community's needs. Under the direction of former Associate Membership Director, Maria Jose Angelelli, the team has been focusing on planning this year's training events, including the New Workers Institute in June, the statewide BIPP conference in April and a Dedication Curricula that will be presented in four parts from April to July. Additional regional trainings will also be provided.

“We're going to continue providing the technical assistance and training that TCFV is known for, but we will also develop new sensitivities regarding the needs of individual programs and regions.”

“We're going to continue providing the technical assistance and training that TCFV is known for, but we will also develop new sensitivities regarding the needs of individual programs and regions,” said Angelelli. “With a state as large and diverse as Texas, there is a need to more accurately understand our programs' different needs and requirements.”

Effort is also being made to identify professionals and consultants who may be more effectively positioned to provide assistance to local programs. Through this process, TCFV hopes not only to be a resource but also to act as a guide to finding prompt and effective solutions for constituents.

Social Safety Nets (Policy)

Continuing on a twenty-nine-year tradition of effecting policy at the statewide level, the new Policy Team is currently busy preparing for the legislative session and lobbying lawmakers to make sure the needs of TCFV's constituents are represented for the next biennium.

“The Policy Team will continue working in areas that our constituents have identified as very valuable to them — advocacy with the Legislature, state agencies and legal systems,” Senior Policy Director Laura Wolf said.

Additionally, the expanded focus on creating new options for victims of violence was a key focus area determined by TCFV's constituents during the transformation process. “In our new efforts we will work to help create and enhance ‘social safety nets’ for victims of family violence, by expanding our work on housing and employment policies and accessibility,” Wolf said.

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TCFV Hires New President

On February 27, Pam Wessel officially assumed her role as the new President of TCFV.



Pam began her 21-year career in the nonprofit world as a volunteer court advocate for battered women.

Her volunteer work ignited a passion and a commitment to serving women and their children and soon led to a staff position at the Center for Women and Families in Louisville, Kentucky. Pam's love of policy work began when she aligned with other advocates around the state to promote passage of a marital rape law; the efforts proved successful when Kentucky passed a marital rape law in 1990.

After almost eleven years with the Center for Women and Families working in various positions, Pam became the Executive Director of the Lincoln Trail Domestic Violence Program in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, providing shelter and supportive services to battered women and their children. Pam continued her policy work by also serving as a registered lobbyist. During her tenure at both agencies, Pam was active at the state level as a Board Member and officer of the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association.

In 2000, Pam decided to explore other areas of work and did consulting and grant writing for nonprofits around the country and also provided services through Hospice to terminally ill patients and their families. However, her passion for working with victims of violence and abuse led her to Texas in 2002, where she became Executive Director of the Advocacy Center for Crime Victims and Children in Waco. Pam quickly became involved in state-level work and served on the Legislative Committee for the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault. Pam returned to Louisville, Kentucky in 2005 due to family obligations. There she worked for Metro United Way as the Director of Community Initiatives and served as a registered lobbyist for the organization.

Pam is looking forward to helping TCFV continue to be a leader in keeping Texas families safe.

New TCFV Executive Staffing

Sheryl Cates
Chief Executive Officer

Dyanne Purcell
Chief Operating Officer

Pam Wessel
Coalition President

Maria Jose Angelelli
Director of Support to Service Providers

Laura Wolf
Senior Policy Director

Jennifer Margulies
Director of Prevention Programs

Grace Salas
Human Resources Director

Chris Garza
Finance Director

Purple Postcard and Capitol Day Events Work to Influence Lawmakers

Rajani Ramachandran, TCFV Staff Writer

The Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) kicked off the 80th session of the Texas Legislature by hosting two crucial and successful events, Capitol Day and the Purple Postcard press conference. On February 14, 2007, TCFV joined with the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) to co-host a Day at the Capitol for over 150 advocates, volunteers and survivors from various family violence, sexual assault and BIPP programs across the state, to meet with their legislators to talk about the importance of state funding for these services.

Supporters of family violence and sexual assault programs gathered at the First United Methodist Church Education Center to hear Rep. Ellen Cohen (D-Houston), Rep. Valinda Bolton (D-Austin) and Rexanne Bowers, a survivor of sexual assault and domestic violence. Cohen, who is the President and CEO of the Houston Area Women's Center, spoke about the importance of communicating with legislators. Cohen commented, "As a fellow advocate, I implore you to speak with your legislators — only by communicating our needs to elected officials will we see those needs met." Cohen continued, "As a member of the Texas House, I can speak to the value of hearing from advocates in my constituency and taking their needs into consideration, and I assure you that my colleagues in the House and the Senate feel the same way." Bolton echoed Cohen's sentiments, noting that victim advocates have the power to put a face to an often faceless crime.

Rexanne Bowers, a survivor of sexual and domestic violence, police officer and Tarrant County Women's Center volunteer, stressed the value of victim service providers in Texas communities. "The services that shelters and rape crisis centers provide is invaluable. Without these agencies, victims of sexual assault or abuse have few options and an often minimal support system," she said. "I know that the Tarrant County Women's Center was there when I needed it, and as a member of law enforcement, I want to make sure it stays open and available to serve victims who need support."

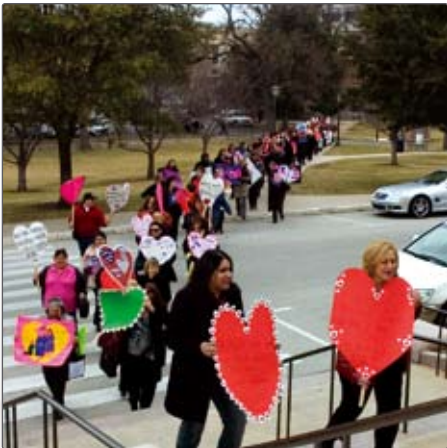
Participants then marched to the Capitol carrying valentines for their elected officials and spent the rest of the day presenting the valentines and discussing the importance of continued funding.

The Purple Postcard press conference was held on February 21, 2007, at the Capitol to stress the importance of continued full funding of family violence services in Texas. TCFV received over 10,000 purple postcards from people across Texas who believe in the importance of funding family violence services and who want to urge their legislators to prioritize this funding as the budget for the next biennium is developed.

Thanking the Legislature for past support, Laura Wolf, Senior Policy Director for TCFV, said, "State funding for family violence services ensures that victims of family violence in Texas have access to emergency shelter, counseling, safety planning, legal advocacy and other life-saving services. In fiscal year 2006, Texas family violence programs delivered these critical services to more than 81,000 women, children and men who were escaping family violence."

Sen. Jane Nelson (R-Lewisville) reiterated the importance of the issue of domestic violence and the need to fund programs that provide those essential services. Rep. John Davis (R-Houston) talked about the importance of raising boys to be "good men" and promised to do what he can to support the cause. The final speaker was Laura Pressley, a survivor of domestic violence, who talked about the time she spent at a Houston-area shelter and how the program helped her when she wanted to get out of an abusive relationship.

Members of TCFV's Policy Team delivered the 10,000 purple postcards to the respective legislators in the days following the conference.



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Education Code

Require school districts to adopt teen dating violence policies.

TCFV is working to expand existing laws regarding public school safety so that schools may have effective policies and tools to better address the needs of students experiencing violence and abuse within teen dating relationships. (HB 121, by Representative Dukes / SB 86 by Senator Hinojosa)

Labor Code

Expand unemployment compensation to better benefit victims of domestic violence.

Under current law, victims of family violence and stalking who are forced to leave their employment due to family violence may be eligible for unemployment compensation. However, fewer than 100 victims have been able to take advantage of this option, given the eligibility requirements. TCFV is working to amend the current eligibility requirements so as to better meet the Legislature's intent to afford victims of family violence and stalking unemployment benefits when they have no choice but to leave their jobs. (HB 550 by Representative Dukes / SB 142 by Senator Zafferini)

Code of Criminal Procedure

Require accreditation of battering intervention and prevention programs (BIPPs), so that all services to which batterers are referred meet common standards of quality.

Many communities throughout Texas do not have state-regulated BIPPs, and as a result judges are forced to refer abusers to intervention services that have little or no accountability standards. TCFV is working to establish an accreditation program whereby all programs to which abusers are referred will meet the same high standards of batterer accountability and victim safety. (HB 197 by Representative Gonzales-Tourielles/ SB 44 by Senators Nelson & Shapiro)

Create a state-run Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) for victims of domestic violence.

Safety planning with victims of family violence often involves keeping one's address and whereabouts confidential. Increasingly, abusers have access to technology that enables them to track their victims and continue to threaten their safety. As a result, the mail has become one of the main methods that abusers utilize to stalk and otherwise continue abusing victims. TCFV is working to create an ACP in which certain victims would have their mail forwarded by the State thereby maintaining their address as confidential and out of public record. (HB 569 by Representative Gonzales / HB 597 by Representative Guillen / SB 74 by Senator Lucio)

Penal Code

Add strangulation to the definition of "serious bodily injury." In domestic violence cases, strangulation is highly correlated with an increased risk of lethality. However, in many parts of the state the penalties associated with strangulation do not reflect the seriousness of the crime. TCFV is working to amend the statute in order to give prosecutors more direction in seeking higher penalties for those offenses. (SB 45 by Senator Nelson)

If you would like more information about priority items to the 80th Texas Legislature, domestic violence services in Texas or about state funding for those services, please contact TCFV's Policy Team at 512-794-1133.

Domestic Violence in Texas: By the Numbers

Each year the Texas Council on Family Violence collects the number of domestic violence cases and the volume of services Texas shelters provide to victims. These numbers are taken from state and local agencies, shelter databases and media reports.

Family Violence in Texas in 2005

Family Violence incidents	187,811
Women killed by intimate partners (Including husbands, ex-husbands, common-law husbands, boyfriends and ex-boyfriends)	143

Family violence incidents are reported annually by the Texas Department of Public Safety. The number of women killed is taken from the TDPS Uniform Crime Report as well as media articles and law enforcement agencies.

Family Violence Shelter Services in Texas in 2006

Adults sheltered	12,356
Children sheltered	16,968
Adults receiving nonresidential services	36,254
Children receiving nonresidential services	15,621
Adults denied shelter (Due to lack of space)	22%
Hotline calls answered	182,459
Referrals and information provided to batterers	7,015

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission compiles the numbers of family violence shelter services through the Internal Tracking Service (ITS), which is a statewide database. This database records numbers from each shelter in Texas and calculates the total volume of shelter services provided to victims of domestic violence.

Red Flags Campaign Goes on Statewide Media Tours

Jitin Hingorani, Staff Writer

After a successful launch at San Antonio's Palo Alto College in the Fall of 2006, the Red Flags campaign is taking its message on the road and will be appearing soon in a city close to you.

Funded by the office of Texas' Honorable Attorney General Greg Abbott, the prevention-based public awareness campaign aims to educate 16 to 24-year-olds about the signs of dating violence and emphasize the importance of healthy relationships. Our research, through a comprehensive online survey with Texas youth, indicated that 75 percent of them have either personally experienced dating violence or know someone who has. During the first phase of the campaign, the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) has collaborated with family violence programs in Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio and Austin. The most recent phase of this campaign involved creating television and radio public service announcements (PSAs) and posters for greater visibility and outreach all across Texas.

In order to achieve that goal, TCFV will be partnering with shelters in different regions of Texas to reach the local print, television and radio media. Because of the significant media presence in these cities, TCFV will be visiting the following eight

areas during fiscal year 2007:

- Lubbock
- Harlingen/Weslaco/Brownsville/McAllen
- Tyler/Longview
- Midland/Odessa
- El Paso
- Waco/Killeen/Temple
- Wichita Falls
- Corpus Christi

If you would like to reach your local television or radio stations with the Red Flags public service announcements, TCFV will send you copies of the PSAs and provide technical assistance and talking points about the campaign. You can view the PSAs online at www.knowtheredflags.com. To order a copy of the PSAs or the posters, please contact TCFV at (512) 794-1133 or 800-525-1978.



Around the State

Temple Shelter to Open

In May 2007, the Families in Crisis shelter in Killeen, Texas, will be opening a new facility in Temple to extend its services in the neighboring region. "We are thrilled that Temple is in our service area, but it is becoming harder and harder to provide service to them without disrupting their lives and taking their kids out of school," says Diane Pascoe, Executive Director of Families in Crisis. "It makes sense to bring the service to them." The facility will be located in downtown Temple and house around 12 people. Victims of family violence will be able to seek the same services offered in the Killeen program, ranging from emergency shelter to crisis intervention counseling. For more information or to make a donation, please contact Suzanne Armour at 254-634-1184.

SAFVIC

The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Investigators Course (SAFVIC) is a program provided to all Texas law enforcement agencies that trains officers about available resources to

investigate and prevent domestic violence. SAFVIC instructors provide officers with information about investigative techniques, family violence and sexual assault laws, and available community resources for victims. The program hopes that promoting strong communication between the victim service providers, prosecution and law enforcement will help reduce family violence and sexual assault. Visit www.safvic.org for more information.

Casa de Misericordia

Casa de Misericordia has been serving Laredo and Webb County since 1998 and in September of 2004, the shelter opened the Lamar Bruni Vergara Education Center, which provides life skills education to victims of domestic abuse. Survivors of domestic abuse have access to a wide variety of classes, ranging from GED training to culinary arts. Other services include support groups, child literacy programs and a two-week summer camp. With access to a variety of resources, Casa de Misericordia allows victims of domestic violence the opportunity to stand on their own.

Transformation Focuses TCFV on Three Strategic Areas

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An in-depth explanation of the Policy Team's work to secure funding and supportive policy at the 80th Legislature can be found on page 1 of this issue.

Prevention

The creation of the Prevention Team allows TCFV to endorse domestic violence prevention in Texas and to support family violence programs in their own efforts. Existing projects, such as the Men's Nonviolence Project, the Communities of Faith initiative and the Red Flags teen dating violence prevention program, have a new strategic focus within the department. The new staff will also be surveying family violence programs in Texas in order to gain a comprehensive knowledge of current prevention work, allowing TCFV to better understand programs' prevention needs and facilitate networking between groups.

"The creation of the Prevention Team at TCFV is very exciting," said Director Jennifer Margulies. "It says that we're committed to the belief that yes, it is possible to end domestic violence one day—and that when we put the time, energy and resources towards working with others across the state, we can all bring that day closer."

The team is also undertaking national research, expanding the prevention resources available at TCFV for family violence programs and reaching out to form new partnerships with statewide organizations and agencies to help prevent domestic violence. The prevention staff is eager to learn about best practices—from school-based programs and innovative grassroots approaches, to outcome evaluation methods and engaging men—to share them with prevention practitioners across the state.

With TCFV's transformation largely complete, great effort is being made to hire dedicated, qualified employees to help TCFV implement the new developments in the agency. A complete list of new positions can be found at www.tcfv.org/transformation.

TCFV's restructuring process is ongoing—the coalition will continue to reevaluate its effectiveness in meeting the needs of its three strategic focus areas. "Our goal is to assure we are always meeting our constituents' needs," Cates said, "that we are all working together to make Texas a safer place for families."

To find out more about TCFV's transformation, see a complete list of staff changes and positions and learn how it affects your program, please visit tcfv.org/transformation.

Serving Batterers with Disabilities

Exploring Options to Help Keep BIPP Programs Accessible

By Jennifer O'Donnell-Taylor, Staff Writer

Currently, when a Battering Intervention and Prevention Program (BIPP) in Texas receives a client with a disability—for example, deafness, a cognitive disability or a learning disability—few resources exist to help the program provide the best possible services to that client. Written materials and studies regarding assisting batterers with disabilities are scarce.

Tony Switzer, a TCFV staff member who has worked with BIPPs for many years, said, "Unless programs have considered ahead of time how they will serve BIPP participants with disabilities, when a guy first contacts the BIPP, they won't know what accommodations they should provide and what types of special needs that person may have." With this in mind, TCFV has begun a series of projects to provide Texas BIPPs with the knowledge necessary to serve all batterers.

TCFV's Fourth Annual Statewide BIPP Conference on April 13 and 14 in Austin will include a workshop on working with clients with disabilities. Brian East of Advocacy, Inc., a state-

wide organization that advocates for the rights of people with disabilities, and Jonas Schwartz of the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services will conduct the workshop. "This workshop is designed to help programs become more accessible to clients with disabilities. We'll discuss the legal requirements for both public and private providers, as well as best practices," said East.

TCFV will also create a technical assistance resource packet about working with batterers with disabilities that will be sent to Texas BIPPs. In addition, Advocacy, Inc. will assist TCFV in reviewing BIPP policies and procedures to ensure that they provide adequate guidance for serving batterers with disabilities.

Maria José Angelelli, TCFV's Director of Support to Service Providers, said, "We want to ensure that Texas BIPPs are aware of their obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. But beyond that, we want everyone who accesses these programs to benefit from them to the fullest extent possible."



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Three Texas Programs Winners of Allstate Coalition Grant Program Funds

Amy Price, TCFV Grants Officer

Congratulations to the Family Crisis Center (Harlingen), Family Crisis Center of the Big Bend (Alpine) and Center Against Family Violence (El Paso), all of whom worked with TCFV to submit an application for the Allstate Foundation's Domestic Violence Program 2007 grant. The Allstate Foundation Domestic Violence Program allows direct services programs to spend awarded funds on very high local priorities that represent steps toward meaningful social change.

As domestic violence service providers, these winning programs from Texas operate in the Texas-Mexico borderlands and face poverty, distance and countless challenges to success. The population they serve, including undocumented residents, is far greater than any census counts. Distances are so great between any two shelters that multiple eastern seaboard states could fit in the gaps. Language barriers require sought-after bilingual staff. Cultural barriers make change a slow process. Each of these three shelters is doing the work daily of promoting safety with as much encouragement for economic-self sufficiency as can be introduced during the time the staff work with the clients.

The Allstate Foundation developed this funding opportunity to help survivors transition into safe and secure lives by addressing economic self-sufficiency needs. Eligible programming had to address factors that included economic self-sufficiency, financial management, economic restoration/justice and the most prevalent crisis-oriented needs of survivors when they first access services (e.g., financial relief in protection orders, emergency housing and credit repair). Funding could also be used for emergency assistance to ensure safe and vital remedies for survivors in crisis (e.g., housing deposit, overdue utility bills, and/or transportation vouchers). Each of the Texas programs that participated in the winning application earned \$15,000 for projects they designed that reflect clients' needs along the Texas-Mexico border.

