

RESPONDING to DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Integration of Criminal Justice and Human Services

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To the millions who endure and survive and to those who protect and support.

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The Role and Context of Agency Responses to Domestic Violence

Chapter Overview

The movement to end domestic violence in the United States began more than a century ago. In 1885, volunteers working with a coalition of women's organizations in Chicago started a "court watch" project designed to monitor proceedings that involved female and child victims of abuse and rape. In addition to providing legal aid and personal assistance, they also sent abused women to a shelter run by the Women's Club of Chicago, the first shelter of its kind. The Chicago initiative was short-lived, however, and the idea of using emergency housing as a first-line protection did not take hold until a May afternoon in 1972 when the first call to a shelter was made to Women's Advocates in St. Paul, Minnesota. As recalled by Sharon Vaughan (2009), a founder of the St. Paul program and a pioneer in the battered women's movement:

The call was . . . from Emergency Social Services. A worker said a woman was at the St. Paul Greyhound bus station with a two-year-old child. To get a job, she had traveled 150 miles from Superior, Wisconsin, with two dollars in her pocket. What were we expected to do? Where would they stay after two days at the Grand Hotel? One of the advocates borrowed a high chair and stroller and we took them to the apartment that was our office. These were the first residents we sheltered. The two-year-old destroyed the office in one night because all the papers were tacked on low shelves held up by bricks. His mother didn't talk about being battered; she said she wanted to go to secretarial school to make a life for her and her son. She tried to get a place to live, but no one would rent to her without a deposit, which she didn't have. . . . After a couple of weeks, she went back to Superior, and every Christmas for several years sent a card thanking Women's Advocates for being there and enclosed \$2.00, the amount she had when she came to town. (p. 3)

During the next 3 decades, the use of shelters for women escaping abusive partners became widespread in the United States and in dozens of other countries. The shelter movement helped to stimulate a revolution in the societal response to domestic violence victims and offenders that has circled the globe, stirring women from all walks of life; of all races, religions, and ages; and in thousands of neighborhoods, to challenge men's age-old prerogative to hurt, demean, or otherwise subjugate their female partners virtually at will. In addition to the proliferation of community-based services for victims, the revolution consists of the three other major components that are the focus of this text: (a) the criminalization of domestic violence; (b) the mobilization of a range of legal, health, and social service resources