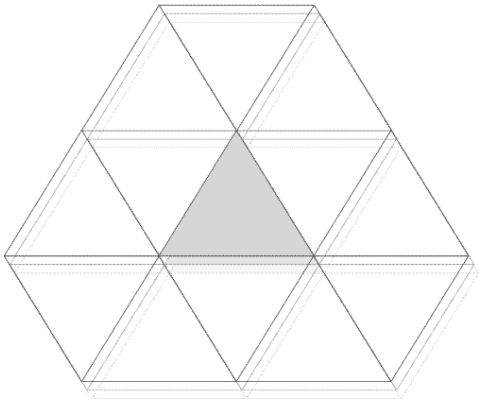
From a Web of Fear and Isolation to a Community Safety Net:

Cross-Training on Abuse in Later Life



Trainer's Manual

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Pennsylvania Department of Aging are currently engaged in a collaborative training project, funded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, to enhance the safety and access to services for older victim/survivors of domestic violence throughout Pennsylvania.

The project's primary goal is to establish clear and concise direction to guide direct service providers in both the aging and domestic violence systems to establish a coordinated response to meet the needs of victims/survivors age 50 and older.

A coordinated response is a framework for communication between the aging and domestic violence networks to enhance safety and access to service for older victims/survivors of domestic violence. This framework respects philosophical differences, policies and procedures and provides guidelines to promote our mutual goals.

This project will address the unique needs and experiences of older victims/survivors of domestic violence and help agencies to develop a constructive working relationship in order to provide a coordinated service package to best meet the needs of the individual victim/survivor.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bonnie Brandl, M.S.W., is the Program Director for the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL), a project of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV). NCALL provides technical assistance, training and consultation on domestic abuse in later life. Ms. Brandl has worked with battered women and their children for over 15 years and the WCADV for over 10 years. Her published articles, manuals and booklets on domestic abuse in later life have been distributed throughout the country. She has presented at events across the United States on family violence, elder abuse and abuse of people with developmental disabilities.

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGING

The Pennsylvania Department of Aging was created in 1978 by the state legislature after years of intensive lobbying by individuals and groups representing our rapidly growing elderly population. It is charged by the Older Americans Act and the Pennsylvania General Assembly with being an advocate for the interests of older Pennsylvanians at all levels of government.

The Department of Aging is one of the smallest departments of state government in terms of staff, but one of the largest in terms of budget and its impact on the lives of Pennsylvanians. The Department utilizes federal and state dollars, but most of the budget comes from the Pennsylvania Lottery Fund.

The Commonwealth has approximately 2.5 million persons over the age of 60, with almost 255,000 over the age of 85. One in five older Pennsylvanians lives in or near poverty and close to 200,000 are identified as minority.

The Department of Aging is designed for efficient planning, training, research and administration of federal and state funds. The Department oversees many services and benefits to older Pennsylvanians – most provided through the 52 Area Agencies on Aging which were created in the federal Older Americans Act and Pennsylvania's Act 70. The Department is a leader and partner in the state and local aging network.

The Department works hand-in-hand with the Governor's Office and the General Assembly on legislation affording older persons a quality way of life. It is the focal point of state coordination and planning for elderly initiatives in Pennsylvania to include long-term care programs for the frail and chronically ill.

The Department of Aging is looking to the future, planning how best to meet the needs of Pennsylvania's older citizens and their communities. As we move forward in the 21st century, the emphasis is on preparing for the Commonwealth's future, and the mission continues to be to enhance the quality of life of older Pennsylvanians by empowering the community, the family and the individual.

PENNSYLVANIA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It was a quarter of a century ago – in 1976 – when a handful of women from across Pennsylvania joined forces to advocate for passage of their state's first domestic violence law and to coordinate a network of services for victims of domestic violence that eventually would extend to all corners of the Commonwealth.

With very little else other than their own ingenuity and dedication, these advocates embarked on a mission to challenge a society that fails to acknowledge the brutality and lethality of domestic violence… to confront a criminal justice system that is reluctant to hold batterers responsible for their violence… and to empower battered women so they may re-establish their physical, social, and economic dignity.

Their successful effort formed the backdrop and foundation for the establishment of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV) – the nation's first state domestic violence coalition. Today this Coalition continues to provide a lifeline to safety for battered women and their children and serves as a national leader in bringing about true social change. Since 1993, PCADV has received federal funding to operate the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and to serve as a partner in the National Battered Women's Justice Project. PCADV's Washington, DC, Legal Office administers the National STOP Violence Against Women Grants Technical Assistance Project, the National Center on Full Faith & Credit and the Legal Assistance Providers' Technical Outreach Project.

PCADV is a private non-profit organization sharing the work of its mission with its statewide network of community-based programs – all individually and collectively working to eliminate domestic violence. PCADV strives to empower victims by providing shelter, support and advocacy and works to eliminate the crime of domestic violence through public education as well as training and technical assistance to organizations, communities and policymakers.

Since 1976, this statewide network has grown from nine to 62 domestic violence programs, which have played a critical role, both at the state and federal level, in the enactment of landmark legal protections, the development of model programs standards and the implementation of innovative services.

More than one million victims of domestic violence have benefited from the services of PCADV's statewide network since that small group of advocates came together all those years ago with a vision for a state where women and children could live free from fear and violence in their own homes.

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