

FAMILY VIOLENCE: A MIGRANT COMMUNITY ISSUE

OUTLINE

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS FAMILY VIOLENCE?

-legally, it is the intentional use or threat of force by one member of a family or household against another member of the same family or household.

-battering is the repeated use or threat of force including:
o physical
o sexual
o psychological
o social
o economic

-today family violence is a major community health problem,

-occurs among families of all racial, economic, education and religious backgrounds

-once it begins, escalation in severity is almost guaranteed

WHAT IS THE INCIDENCE?

-every 15 seconds, a woman is battered in this country

-occurs in as many as 2/3 of all marriages

-because of the stress, isolation and lack of alternatives for migrant and seasonal farmworker women, this figure is possibly a low estimate of the actual incidence of family violence.

HOW MANY PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM HAVE SEEN A VICTIM OF FAMILY VIOLENCE DURING THE LAST WEEK?

-the answer is probably most of you

LET ME PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, DURING THE LAST WEEK HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE SEEN;

-a woman who seems unusually isolated, has a very poor self concept, seems depressed, seems to have alot of vague illnesses, or other emotional problems

- or a child who is very angry and abusive to other children, overly fearful, is frequently absent, frequently ill, depressed, socially inappropriate, or prefers to remain isolated from others

-these are all potential symptoms of the effects of family violence

WHO ARE THE BATTERERS?

-men commit 95% of the assaults

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

-children are also frequently injured in battering episodes between adults; 6.9 million children are severely assaulted each year.

-twenty-five to forty percent of all women who are battered say they have been beaten during pregnancy.

-men who batter pregnant women are 3 times more violent outside the home

-much of the profile of battered Migrant women resembles that of other American women victims of domestic violence. These common characteristics include

- o traditional view of women's roles as wife/homemaker ;
- o isolation; especially during travel and time at home base
- o low self-esteem combined with a feeling of guilt that abuse may be justified,
- o deep belief that the men they love will change,

- financial/ emotional dependency,

-greater fear of the problems of survival outside the family than of the violence within it.

UNIQUE PROBLEMS OF MIGRANT VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

1. Cultural

-deep sense of family honor and loyalty, shame of losing face
deter reporting

-sense of dishonoring the whole family by revealing
abuse

-abhorrence toward "losing face" stems from the traditional
use of guilt and shame to discipline children, particularly in
Asian cultures

-thus an Asian woman is much more likely to feel shame than
anger and much less likely to report or prosecute the abuser

-taking responsibility and blame for problems and a
fatalistic resignation to intolerable conditions are seen as
valued traits among many cultures

-fatalism may be summed up by a Japanese phrase, meaning
"can not be helped"

-quality of forbearance makes identification/ intervention
very difficult in the case of family violence

-cultural stigma against using social services

2. Language

-lack of the availability of confidential interpreters;
interpreters may breach the woman's confidence or be a
relative or friend of the victim or the abuser and put the
woman and her children in greater danger

-lack of bilingual services, service providers and education
materials

3. ENVIRONMENT/ EDUCATION

Increased Isolation

-geographic and social isolation are magnified by social
work conditions

-manifestations of this isolation include:

- o no phone service
- o lack of public transportation
- o long response times for police and medical emergency services
- o lack of jobs, child care, housing, health care, social services, legal and judicial resources

-seasonal work may mean months of unemployment and result in a woman being trapped with an abusive partner for long periods of time

-the big city is intimidating to the battered farmworker woman, who must leave her family and change her lifestyle to find safety, city attitudes may seem strange and unaccepting, so traveling to the city shelter creates an additional crisis

-a migrant woman frequently has no money of her own to support herself and her children

-restraining orders and some of the other legal options are not effective in the case of migrant family violence

-most migrant and seasonal farmworker communities remain isolated from the present support resources for victims of family violence.

Education Issues

-Cycle of Violence

-Phase I; increased tension, anger, blaming

-Phase II; battering, or verbal abuse,

o I have often heard health providers say that she was just emotionally abused however, a battered woman will frequently tell you that bruises fade with time but psychological scars remain and is the most damaging.

-Phase III; calm stage, battering is rationalized or minimized, "I was drunk, it was all those bills, I couldn't cope, but I'm sorry, I love you and I won't ever do it again

-understanding that violent behavior is not a normal part of family life