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Investigating the perceived effectiveness of domestic violence programs in Massachusetts

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Abstract

Domestic violence affects many individuals on a daily basis. Rates of domestic violence have increased and affect one in three women, and one in five men in Massachusetts (Jane Doe Inc., 2019) and accounts for 15 percent of all violent crime committed in the United States (National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.). The current research examines the perceived effectiveness of the services provided by domestic violence programs designed to assist survivors in Essex County, Massachusetts. The current research investigated how well Massachusetts programs can be accessed and utilized by survivors. Qualitative data, in the form of face-to-face interviews with program directors and co-directors, were used to investigate the perceived effectiveness of different programs. Results of the interviews indicate that programs are effective in assisting survivors of domestic violence, but lack proper staffing and funding that would make them more accessible, beneficial, and effective. Policy implications are discussed and improvements are proposed to make programs more effective and beneficial in the future.

Investigating the effectiveness of domestic violence programs in Massachusetts

Domestic violence is defined by the National Domestic Violence Hotline as “a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship” (National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.). The abuse that is commonly developed throughout the course of the relationship, can be of physical, emotional, sexual, or financial (National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.). Overall, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) has stated that domestic violence affects about 10 million individuals in the United States annually. One in four women, and one in nine men experience some form of domestic violence abuse by their intimate partner throughout their lifetime (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d.). Domestic violence impacts many individuals regardless of their age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, or nationality. The Office for Prevention of Domestic Violence suggests that 97 percent of abusers are males who have a female partner, indicating that the percentage of female survivors is much higher when compared to males; this is due to the fact that females are victimized at higher rates than males (Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, n.d.). Further, it accounts for 15 percent of all violent crimes committed in the U.S. and in the most serious cases includes the use of a weapon in 19 percent of those crimes (National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.). Survivors of domestic violence are often torn between leaving and staying with their abusive partner. Hereby, it is of importance to note that many women sway back and forth between the two options. In making this decision, survivors can be assisted by community-based services that attempt to help these women in their decision-making process.

Building on this, previous research has explained that among women who are domestically abused, rates of homelessness and housing instability significantly increase. Baker

and colleagues (2010) have suggested that women often times either lack the economic strength to leave their abusive household, or are restricted in their abilities to find jobs supporting financial independency. These women either lack the education needed for a well-paying job or the money they make is simply not enough to afford stable housing for themselves and dependents (e.g. children). These difficulties may then lead to homelessness (Baker, Billhardt, Warren, Rollins, & Glass, 2010). Similar results were presented by Goodman, Smyth, Borges, and Singer (2009) who centered their research on the intersectionality of domestic violence and poverty. It was found that as income for women decreased the likelihood for violence increased. Further, they argued that a majority of homeless women had a history of victimization by an intimate partner (Goodman et al., 2009).

Addressing the issue of homelessness stemming from intimate violence has become a global concern as intimate violence occurs across races, cultures, and countries. A study conducted in the U.K. in 2009 focused on the correlation between domestic violence and homelessness. Netto, Pawson, and Sharp (2009) found that the services provided for homeless women generally failed to detect the factor of domestic violence as influential in the women's life situations (Netto et al., 2009). In accordance with these findings are the discoveries made by Sullivan (2012), who reviewed empirical evidence on domestic violence shelter services. He argued that across the United States, there were fewer than 1,500 domestic violence shelters available to survivors. Nevertheless, he found that these few shelters often provided effective shelter for survivors and their children. In addition, education and other training programs were offered within the shelters that promoted two things: individual growth and independence. Sullivan (2012) argued that living in a domestic violence shelter improved the women's feelings

of self-control and stability. Although these shelters were deemed effective, he underlined the underrepresentation of these shelters nationally (Sullivan, 2012).

While homelessness is a possible result of domestic violence, it is a consequence that is not battled until it occurs. Researchers have argued that besides the fact that shelter programs are not utilized to their full potential to house more survivors, they should be determined “emergency” resolutions rather than intervention programs. With that being said, there appears to be a need for programs that intervene at an earlier stage in the dispute between intimate partners (Netto et al., 2009). The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, that was passed in 1984 by Congress, requires the government to provide funding to programs that serve women and children who are survivors of domestic violence. This act was expanded by the federally enacted Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), that was initially passed in 1994, and which has been revised and expanded since (Goddard, 2014). Common services and intervention programs provided to survivors include, but are not limited to, services such as crisis hotlines, shelters, counseling and support groups, legal counsel (e.g. court orders against perpetrator), and education/training programs (Ohio Domestic Violence Network, n.d.). Hereby, it is important that an understanding of why domestic violence occurs precedes the adoption of these programs, in order to ensure their effectiveness in assisting survivors of domestic violence (Jolin & Moose, 1997).

These services, often provided in the form of shelters, offer refuge and include programs assisting women who either have already decided to change their lives or who are on the verge of doing so. A longitudinal study that was conducted by Grossman and Lundy (2011) focused on the impact of onsite shelter services on women who had experienced domestic violence, in comparison to women who had not accessed any help by a program. In addition to previous

research on shelter services showing that shelter services increase the self-esteem of women (Itzhaky & Porat, 2005; Orava, McLeod, & Sharpe, 1996), this particular study highlighted that women who had resided in a shelter had attended a variety of services designed to assist them. Grossman and Lundy (2011) concluded that more community-based services in the form of shelters are necessary to ensure that all women in need are able to get services essential for their well-being.

While all these programs serve survivors in different ways from escaping a violent living situation to rebuilding a “violence-free” life, they often build on the idea of empowerment. Kasturirangan (2008) focused her research on the value of empowerment within domestic violence programs. She argued that in order for a woman to regain power and control over her life, she needs to feel a certain degree of empowerment. That is, the idea of providing women with the ability to feel empowerment, such as the process of goal-setting, self-determination, and confidence in leaving their abusive life situation. Kasturirangan (2008) suggested that domestic violence programs need to incorporate the differences in barriers and abilities of women to access resources. She proposed programs that empower women by helping them establish goals for themselves, which then urges the program directors to provide the appropriate resources needed in the different stages of the empowerment process (Kasturirangan, 2008).

Adding to these findings are the contributions made by Sullivan and Virden (2017), who maintained that survivors entering shelters have different needs that should be addressed in unique ways. While some survivors may be in need of temporary shelter, others may further need assistance with employment or education. According to Sullivan and Virden (2017), staff should provide services that focus on safety planning, provide information and counsel regarding civil and victim’s rights, and connect the survivors with other community-based intervention

programs. Hereby, the strategies that are used to help individuals, particularly safety and exit planning, need to be carefully chosen and calculated. As explained by Davis (2015), the safety of the survivor(s) is most crucial in the intervention process. She demands programs to, not only respond to the needs of those affected, but to further assess the risk of the offender and the protection of the survivor and his or her confidentiality (Davis, 2015).

Furthermore, Davis (2015) described how programs should be staffed in order to be deemed effective in assisting those in need. She maintains that effective programs consist of a minimum of three different individuals, who form a team and advocate for the survivor. These teams consist of an individual providing treatment, a victim advocate, and a probation officer (Davis, 2015). By demanding training and education for law enforcement employees (i.e. police officers, judges, attorneys, and probation officers), health care professionals, and educators, Garrity (2015) broadens the concept of domestic violence education. Moreover, Garrity (2015) claimed that, not only those working in specifically designed domestic violence programs should be educated on the risks, indicators, and interventions of domestic violence, but further should community members. By informing and training more members of the community, domestic violence may then be prevented or interrupted earlier. Teachers or sports coaches, for example, should be made aware of how to interact with children who have been victimized or who are at risk of victimization by domestic violence. An informed teacher or coach may then not release the child into the custody of a specific parent or guardian if instructed so by victim advocates or other representatives in a particular case (Garrity, 2015).

Sims, Yost, and Abbott (2005) contribute to this discussion with their findings on the use and nonuse of victim services programs. They conducted a survey to explore reasons for the use or nonuse of victim services. They did not only find that services were infrequently used by

those in need, but also that many survivors were uneducated about the programs and services available to them. Sims and colleagues (2005) concluded that in order for survivors to access these services, various types of services and education on their availability needs to increase, and lastly to employ more staff members who are trained in assisting survivors (Sims et al., 2005).

As services vary in degree and availability to which they are offered nationally and on the state level, individual states need to be analyzed in order to determine the types and effectiveness of services offered to survivors. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts lists all domestic violence services that are available on their official government website (www.mass.gov). The listings include nationwide hotline services such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the National Sexual Assault Hotline or SafeLink, as well as statewide organizations. Statewide programs are separated by the areas in which they are offered, and include transitional living programs, advocacy, and counseling services. Programs include, but are not limited to, the YMCA of Greater Lawrence, Voices Against Violence, Womanshelter/Companeras, REACH, and South Shore Resource and Advocacy Center (The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2019).

Generally speaking, the services provided to domestic violence survivors are often a combination of four things: crisis hotlines, emergency shelters, advocacy services, and counseling. It is important to note that all of these services are offered within Massachusetts. Although these services have been examined for their effectiveness in some states, there is very little information regarding the effectiveness of services within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For example, an evaluation conducted by Bennett and co-researchers (2004) assessed the outcomes of domestic violence services in Illinois. Results indicated that crisis hotlines, as well as advocacy services, oftentimes employ a mixture of volunteers and professionals, who have all received extensive training in crisis intervention. Further, this study

found that all services tested (e.g. advocacy, counseling, shelters, and crisis hotlines) were effective in supporting survivors, increasing self-efficacy, and providing a safe environment for those in emergency situations. Moreover, those women seeking services are not only survivors of physical assault but to a greater extent suffer from poverty, homelessness, or other factors that require immediate attention (Bennett et al., 2005).

Although the effectiveness of these services has not been extensively researched, the research that is out there does imply that services provided are generally effective in assisting survivors of domestic violence. Nevertheless, researchers have also noted that not every survivor seeks help from these organizations. As Postmus, Severson, Berry, and Ah Yoo (2009) suggested, most survivors of abuse initially seek help in their immediate environment. Family and friends are contacted more frequently before survivors seek help from outside resources. Postmus and colleagues (2009) found that 82 percent of the women interviewed stated that they would rather deal with the assault on their own, and about 59 percent explained that they did not know enough about resources available to them. Postmus and colleagues (2009) indicated that there is an increased need for education about services available. More so, it needs to be understood that as family and friends are functioning as “first responders” in many domestic violence cases, they need to have an understanding and willingness to help their relatives and friends escape the violent living situation (Postmus et al., 2009).

When it is known that resources are effective when available, but are scarce in their obtainability within the community, change must occur. It is argued that there is a need for an increased number of programs, more staff members employed within those programs, and an expansion of funding that is accessible to meet the needs of survivors. Sullivan and Virden (2017) argued that community resources, in the form of housing, employment, and education,

have to be expanded to ensure that long-term change can occur, and survivors are able to rebuild their lives away from violence and assault (Sullivan & Virden, 2017).

Overall, domestic violence statistics reveal that there is a high exigency for domestic violence services, not only nationwide, but also in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In Massachusetts, one in three women, and one in five men report that they have been victimized by an intimate partner throughout their lifetime either sexually, physically, or in the form of stalking (Jane Doe Inc., 2019). In 2018, there were 15 domestic violence cases in which a woman had been murdered by her intimate partner. Adding to this, is the fact that one in five individuals document that they are homeless due to domestic violence (Jane Doe Inc., 2019). Moreover, of all women that are homeless in Massachusetts, 78 percent have been subjected to rape, physical assault, or stalking. Lastly, domestic violence is highest among those households with the lowest annual income when compared to the highest annual income (Jane Doe Inc., 2019). These numbers demonstrate the need for increased societal awareness of the problem of domestic violence, as well as the demand for more programs focusing on addressing this issue. In order to adequately address the needs of survivors, funding for programs, in addition to staffing, needs to be significantly increased (Sullivan & Virden, 2017).

The Current Study

The current study is of importance because previous research on the effectiveness of domestic violence programs has focused on effects at the national level. Generally, it was found that programs are not used extensively and need improvement in the types and availability of services offered. This study seeks to investigate the perceived effectiveness of domestic violence services from the perspective of individuals working in programs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Factors such as types of services, availability of services, and funding and

staffing concerns, all play a fundamental role in determining what can be done to improve the effectiveness of these programs in the future.

Methodology

Qualitative data were collected through in-person structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with program directors and co-directors of selected domestic violence programs in the northeastern and western parts of Massachusetts to examine the participants' perceived effectiveness of their program and their individual experience working within the program. All programs listed on the Massachusetts government website for domestic violence programs were initially contacted. The programs include the Alternative House in Lowell; Help for Abused Women and their Children (HAWC) in Salem; Supportive Care in Haverhill and Lawrence; Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center in Newburyport; the Women's Resource Center in Haverhill and Lawrence; and the YWCA of Greater Lawrence in Lawrence (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2019). Services provided by these programs vary from advocacy services (HAWC, 2019) to empowering survivors to self-sufficiency (Alternative House, n.d.), to emergency shelter services (YWCA Northeastern Massachusetts, 2019). The missions of these programs are to provide resources to those that are survivors of domestic violence (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2019). Prior to data collection, the Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the research. Further, informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting the in-person interviews. Interviewees were informed that participation in the research was completely voluntary and could be terminated at any point without consequence. The researcher informed participants of their rights, potential harms, and benefits of the study.

Program directors and co-directors of the programs were purposively selected for interviews. All participants were at least 18 years of age. The participants were recruited via

email in an attempt to schedule an in-person interview that lasted for approximately 25 to 30 minutes and would be conducted on the site of the program. The small number of participants interviewed allowed the researcher to gather extensive information on the programs. The interviews were structured. They consisted of questions that were pre-determined by the researcher and presented to all interviewees in the same order. This ensured that the answers could be reliably compared and contrasted by the researcher. The interviews were conducted on the program sites in a quiet, neutral, and private setting. Participants were asked to speak honestly and freely about their opinions and experiences. Following the completion of the interviews, the researcher ensured confidentiality and privacy of data by storing it in a safe place and then analyzed and compared the data using a thematic analysis.

A structured in-person interview instrument was developed to assess the perceived effectiveness of the programs chosen for investigation (please see Appendix). At first, the participants were presented with the definition of services provided by their programs, as stated in their mission statements. Following, the participants were then asked how they would evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of the services provided by their programs. Variables of interest include staffing and funding needs, as well as the overall perceived effectiveness of the program. Staffing needs are defined as the number of personnel needed to effectively provide services of the program to survivors. Funding needs are defined as the amount of money required by the program annually to finance all the services provided. Lastly, the overall perceived effectiveness of the domestic violence programs is investigated. Perceived effectiveness is defined as either successful or unsuccessful in assisting survivors to domestic violence. The overall perceived effectiveness is measured with the help of statements provided by the directors, on how effective they deem their programs to be in assisting survivors by providing programs and services.

Results

The structured interviews measuring staffing, funding, and perceived effectiveness of domestic violence programs provided interesting results. Two directors/co-directors were interviewed for this research. Both interviewees were female. Interviewee one is the director of a domestic violence program in Northeast Massachusetts and had been employed by the program for 25 years prior to interview. Interviewee two has been directing a community engagement program in Western Massachusetts for nine months prior to the interview. The department of community engagement is a program housed within the domestic violence program, which focuses on educating the community on the facts around, risks to, and support options for domestic violence. In addition, the engagement program hosts prevention seminars and programs in schools or other community centers. Both interviewees worked for programs that provided crisis hotlines, emergency shelters, in person counseling, and advocacy services (for both survivors and children), legal counsel and support services, as well as community engagement, prevention, and education programs to survivors of domestic violence. Responses were organized and compared to one another based on the overarching themes of staffing, funding, and overall perceived effectiveness of the program.

Staffing

In terms of staffing, the interviewees disagreed on staffing needs for their programs. Although interviewees argued that their staffing was generally good, interviewee one stated it certainly was not perfect and that staffing for domestic violence programs overall posed a problem. She stated that domestic violence programs generally had no resources for funding extensive professional development measures. Further, she stated that staffing for these programs would never reach an “optimum” when considering the numbers of survivors in need of domestic

violence related services, had risen over the last thirty years and were expected to be rising in the next few years. Hereby, interviewee one stated that there were 37 employees, in addition to 81 volunteers working for the Northeastern Massachusetts program. The interviewee noted that although she thought the staffing was good, if there was the ability to hire further personnel, she would immediately add four full-time employees. In comparison, interviewee two responded that there were around 50 employees working for the Western Massachusetts program, not including volunteers. This interviewee argued that there was an overall satisfaction with the level of staffing and that there was no understaffing nor the need for more personnel at this time.

Funding

When it came to the question of whether or not funding for their programs was appropriate, the interviewees generally agreed on the fact that there was an increased need for federal, as well as state funding for their programs. Both programs received federal and state funding for the provision of their services. More so, both interviewees emphasized that significant amounts of money would be allocated by annual fundraising events and programs. These fundraising events ranged from game and bingo nights, to community sponsored drives or individual donor programs. All of which were of significance to the programs in raising money for their services. By contacting, meeting, and discussing matters with potential donors and sponsors, program directors allocated a large amount of their available funding. In addition, prevention and awareness programs hosted in schools or other community centers were hosted for a fee, further contributing to available funds. The interviewees both argued that there was uncertainty regarding the amount of money made annually by fundraising events and programs, stating that federal and state funding should be increased to match the funding needs of both programs.

Overall perceived effectiveness

The services provided by both programs were similar in nature. The interviewees differed, however, in their statements regarding the number of individuals they serve and the extent to which these individuals used their services. Interviewee one argued that in previous years there had been a slight decrease in cases during the summer time when there was school vacation but that this trend had stopped approximately 8 years ago. She stated that currently there was no notable increase in the overall number of cases at different times of the year, but that the number of children served had overall significantly increased. Interviewee two differed from this as she stated the Western Massachusetts program saw increases in the number of cases during the holidays, although the overall number of cases had not increased. Only one of the two interviewees made a statement regarding caseloads. Interviewee one argued that there was no one perfect caseload. She stated that, in order for the Northeastern Massachusetts program to provide the best assistance possible, service providers must give individual attention to a survivor's needs before moving on to the next client.

Both interviewees deemed their programs and services essential for survivors. Interviewee two stated that she was very satisfied with the services the Western Massachusetts program provided, that she believed the program was successful in achieving what it set out to achieve, and that the program was overall very effective. In comparison, interviewee one was more critical of the overall effectiveness of the Northeastern Massachusetts program. Although she stated that her program was essential to survivors in providing services, especially access to legal representation, transitional housing, and emotional support, she argued that she could not account for the overall effectiveness of the program in the long-term. She emphasized the fact that, not many if any, survivors remained in contact with the program after initial services were

provided. According to interviewee one, it was then hard to deem the program effective if she did not know about the individual long-term outcomes of those who had used the services provided by the program. She qualified this statement by underlining that the Northeastern Massachusetts program was designed to match the desires and unique needs of those individuals they served. In approximately 20 percent of the cases, survivors would return to their abusers or abusive household, which was a decision that had to be accepted by the program and those employed by it. Interviewee one noted that, under these circumstances, the program may not appear to be successful in achieving what it had set out to achieve. She argued that this was not to be attributed to ineffective services, but rather to the fact that the Northeastern Massachusetts program's philosophy prioritizes the survivors' wishes.

Overall, both interviewees deemed their programs as highly influential, essential, and effective in assisting survivors of domestic violence. While interviewee two suggested that there was nothing she would like to see improved, interviewee one noted that she would like to see consistent and sustainable funding, in addition to staff development and the ability to keep these employees long-term. Both stated that it was challenging to work on a restricted budget and having to fear that programs may be suspended due to a lack of funding. Further, both interviewees also agreed that although the work they and their program do is tough and sometimes bittersweet, overall, their jobs are very rewarding and important in providing essential support and services to domestic violence survivors.

Discussion

In the current study, directors and co-directors of domestic violence programs in Massachusetts answered questions regarding staffing and funding needs, as well as their perceptions of how effective their programs were in assisting survivors. The interviews were

conducted prior to the stay-at-home order issued by Governor Charlie Baker due to the global COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. As people are isolated and required to stay within their homes during quarantine, the rates of domestic violence cases significantly increased on the national level. However, it is unclear whether or not the number of individuals requiring assistance at the state level also increased. Although it can be assumed that the demand for domestic violence program services would increase, both interviewees and particularly interviewee two, mentioned that they had not observed an upward trend in individuals seeking assistance prior to the pandemic. It would be interesting to see whether or not these statements would differ following the global pandemic.

Overall, the interviewees agreed that domestic violence programs should receive more federal and state funding. Because fiscal budgets are generally difficult to estimate, funding for these programs largely stems from fundraising events and fees that are charged when programs provide prevention programming in schools. When it comes to funding, it is important to note that the demand for domestic violence programs, especially the number of children who are served, has increased within the last thirty years. Therefore, a lack of sufficient funding can be devastating to domestic violence programs. When there is not enough money raised through fundraising events, programs have to be suspended and less services can be provided to those in need. These findings are consistent with previous research that has found that programs worked most effectively when funding was not scarce. In fact, when funding was increased beyond what federal and state budgeting had allocated, programs were most effective in providing services (Sullivan & Virden, 2017).

In regards to staffing, the interviewees differed in their statements on staffing needs and satisfaction. Although both interviewees voiced their overall satisfaction with staffing within

their programs, results indicated that while the Western Massachusetts program did not experience understaffing, the Northeastern Massachusetts program would greatly benefit from more staff members, as well as from professional development opportunities for their current staff. These findings are consistent with previous research, which found that programs work most effectively if a minimum of three different individuals were employed within a program, including victim advocates, legal representation, and those providing treatment to survivors (Davis, 2015). The findings of the current study suggest that survivors' needs are being met by different individuals employed within the programs, including professionally trained staff members and volunteers.

Overall, similarities in the area of perceived effectiveness of domestic violence programs' ability to assist survivors were found within the current study. Findings suggest that programs are generally deemed effective at assisting survivors even with limitations in funding and staffing. By offering a variety of services to survivors, both temporary and long-term (i.e. shelter), programs appear to be effective in assisting survivors. Statements made by the interviewees lead to the conclusion that, generally speaking, at least some domestic violence programs in Massachusetts were perceived to be effective in assisting survivors of domestic violence.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although positive responses were reported, this study is not without limitations. One limitation to this study is the small sample size, which makes it difficult to validate and generalize these findings to all existing domestic violence programs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Therefore, the external validity of the study decreased due to the very small sample size. Only two domestic violence programs were included in this research, which are not

reflective of all programs that exist within Massachusetts. Due to the global pandemic that has affected various parts of society, not many programs responded to this research solicitation. It can be assumed that, due to the fact that domestic violence cases have increased during this pandemic, directors and co-directors were preoccupied with running their programs effectively and assisting survivors, so there was no time to participate in this research.

In addition to this, findings pertaining to the staffing needs of programs differed immensely from each other, so that divergent results led to inconsistent findings between the two programs. Such differences may enrich the discussion on why that might be the case. Future research should focus on exploring these differences in depth by examining a greater number of domestic violence programs in Massachusetts. It is suggested that places are compared and studied in relation to their geographical location or socio-demographic populations accessing these programs. Additional factors should be identified to help explain the different needs for staffing. Some of these factors could include differences in educational levels of staff members, differences in lengths of employment within programs, or prior exposure or experience with domestic violence, and the relation of these factors to the perceived ability to effectively assist survivors. In addition, future research could focus on the effects that understaffing, and especially underfunding, have on service outcomes for survivors in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As this research has demonstrated, programs appear to be underfunded, which could greatly impact service outcomes.

Strengths and Policy Implications

It is safe to assume that the need for assistance and services provided by domestic violence programs will increase. As there is an upward trend in rates of domestic violence cases during the on-going global pandemic, domestic violence programs will be important resources

for survivors. This research, therefore, is of importance as it examined the current overall perceived effectiveness of domestic violence programs in Massachusetts. The qualitative analysis allowed the researcher to draw important conclusions and provide suggestions for future improvements to these programs.

As the research has shown, programs could greatly benefit from increased funding, and to a lesser extent full-time staff. It is, therefore, recommended that state, as well as federal, funding for domestic violence programs is prioritized. As the need for these programs is increasing at the moment, programs will serve more survivors, requiring more resources. Programs will be in need of increased monetary needs to develop and hold staff, keep programs and services running, and to overall effectively assist survivors (e.g. by providing temporary housing options). Funding should be increased, so that programs do not have to overly rely on fundraising. Fundraising programs may, under the circumstances of the global pandemic, be difficult to conduct. Taking the increased need for services combined with less available funding from fundraising, programs must receive more state and federal funding in order to function properly and deliver services effectively now and in the future.

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Appendix

The following questions are designed to assess the effectiveness of domestic violence programs offered to survivors in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Demographic Information

1. What is the age of the interviewee?
2. What is the gender of the interviewee?
3. What is the highest degree of education completed by the interviewee?
4. What is the race of the interviewee?
5. What is the marital status of the interviewee?

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been employed/working for the program?
2. What does your caseload look like on a weekly basis?
 - a. Are there times of the year the caseload increases or decreases significantly?
 - b. What do you think is the “perfect caseload” to provide the best assistance possible?
 - c. Has there been more or less cases since you first started working in the program?
3. What are the services provided by your program?
4. How important do you think the services provided are to those victims in need?
5. Do you believe your program achieves what it sets out to achieve?
6. Is the program overall effective?
7. Is the funding for your program proper?
8. How many employees does the program have? Do you feel the program is over or under staffed?

9. What are common outcomes of your program?
10. What does a typical day look like within your program?
11. What do you like best about your work?
12. What do you like the least?
13. If there could be improvements made, what would those be?
14. Is there something you would like to see change in the future (e.g. more personnel)?
15. How many victims do you assist within a year?