



**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN APPALACHIAN OHIO:
THE VICTIM'S PERSPECTIVE
2004**

Lisa Contos Shoaf, Ph.D.
Statistical Analysis Center
Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services
140 E. Town Street, 14th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4242
Toll-Free: (800) 448-4842
Telephone: (614) 466-7782
Fax: (614) 466-0308
www.ocjs.ohio.gov

Bob Taft, Governor
Bruce Johnson, Lt. Governor
Karen J. Huey, Director

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Introduction

The State of Ohio has made it a priority to continue, improve, and implement innovative services to meet the needs of domestic violence victims in the 29 federally designated Ohio Appalachian counties. Six of the 29 Appalachian counties are designated 'distressed', a term given to the most economically depressed counties. Twenty-two Ohio counties are designated 'transitional', which indicates those that are below the national average on one or more economic indicators but do not satisfy the criteria of the 'distressed' designation. See Appendix A for a more detailed description of economic levels.

OCJS applied for and received the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Grant (#98-WR-VX-0036) to assess the needs and assets of domestic violence victims in Appalachian Ohio. The goal of the assessment was to allow the State of Ohio to gain a better understanding of the unique challenges faced by domestic violence victims in this rural Ohio region *as perceived by the victims themselves*. An earlier needs assessment of service providers in this region indicated that Appalachian Ohio residents do not have the immediate or the long-term services available to them that rural non-Appalachian counties, medium-sized counties, and large-sized counties have. For 21 of the 23 services listed in the survey, rural Appalachia ranked highest of all the groups indicating a lack of the service. The current study documents the voice of domestic violence victims themselves, the results of which can be compared with and contrasted to the findings of the service provider needs assessment.

Context for the Study

Rural Appalachia suffers from geographic isolation, high unemployment, lack of public transportation, and high levels of poverty. Existing programs have long suffered as a result of limited tax bases, thereby inhibiting sufficient funds available to match grants. These and other debilitating factors create unique needs for rural victims of domestic violence.

The culture and tradition in Appalachia can influence the level of intervention, support, and protection given to battered women. Traditionally, Appalachian culture views domestic violence as a family matter, not as a serious crime, thus discouraging victims from seeking help. This culture also generally reinforces traditional male/female roles, such as the role of the male as head of the household. This can impact the woman's ability to seek help and it can impact her ability to receive help from others who may also subscribe to this patriarchal ideology. Victim support can be further complicated by familiarity among community members, as those who report incidents of domestic violence tend to be stigmatized within these smaller communities. Furthermore, issues may be handled differently when the law enforcement or prosecutors know the abusers, as the criminal justice response to the abusive incident may be minimized. Cultural traits also impact prosecutorial efforts. For example, Appalachian culture emphasizes hunting as a favorite pastime. Under federal law, a convicted domestic violence abuser loses his right to own or possess a gun if convicted, a factor which may influence whether the abuser will plead guilty to a domestic violence charge.

Moreover, the physical reality in Appalachia forces the existing law enforcement structure of the county sheriff, whose offices average less than 12 officers, to cope with all incidents of crime in a large geographic area. Officers and prosecutors are spread

thin with their duties, leaving them little opportunity to attend training on domestic violence and other crime issues. This deficit in training and inconsistent enforcement of policy creates a fragmented criminal justice system instead of a coordinated community response to victims.

Periodic needs assessments such as the Ohio Domestic Violence Needs Assessment are necessary for setting priorities and making decisions about program improvement and allocation of resources. Querying service providers is valuable for several reasons. First, it is an effective way of obtaining a global picture of those services that are (or are not) having the greatest impact on victims. Second, it enables the assessor to understand what the important victim and service provider issues are. Third, it provides the assessor with a sense of where the greatest needs lie, in terms of geographic location, subject matter, training, or informational needs.

As valuable as victim service provider needs assessments are, the underlying assumption is that service providers know best the needs of victims. It is possible that the assessment may not completely reflect the needs of the victims inasmuch as it reflects the needs of the particular agency participating in the assessment. While an effective victim service agency should ultimately cater to the needs of the victims it serves, other outside forces can perhaps distort (even inadvertently) the vision of the service providers. The present study addresses this issue by soliciting participation from victims and former victims of domestic violence to gain insight into their needs.

Methodology

Data for this study were gathered using focus groups. Focus groups offer the advantage of obtaining detailed qualitative information from a small group of insightful individuals who often have a vested interest in a topic. Qualitative research is an accepted and appropriate way of conducting research in the field of victim advocacy, as the approach provides an opportunity to hear, observe and sometimes experience things that may not have been previously considered when investigating long-standing social issues (Creswell, 1998¹).

Three focus groups were conducted with victims in Brown County, Monroe County, and Columbiana County. These counties were strategically chosen to represent not only diversity of location, but also diversity in degree of 'ruralness'. Monroe County, which borders the Ohio River and West Virginia, has a population of approximately 15,000². After reaching a high in the 1980's, its population has been decreasing steadily thereafter. 13.9% of the population lives in poverty. In FY2003, Monroe County was one of 11 counties with the 'distressed' designation. In FY2004, its status moved up to 'transitional.' Brown County borders the Ohio River and Kentucky. Its population of approximately 42,000 has been increasing steadily since the 1930's. 11.6% of the population lives in poverty. Columbiana County shares a border with Pennsylvania. It is

¹ Creswell, John W. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Quoted in C. Bohmer, D.E. Bronson, H. Hartnett, J. Brandt, & K.S. Kania, *Victim Advocacy Services in Urban Programs: A Description by Staff and Clients of Service Provisions and Gaps*.

² The following county data come from the Ohio Office of Development, Strategic Research Center online County Profiles or from U.S. Bureau of Census, Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 3.

the northernmost county designated Appalachian. It has a population of slightly more than 112,000, and two cities within its borders have populations of over 10,000 each. The population of Columbiana has bounced up and down slightly over the past few decades, but for the most part remains stable. 11.5% of its people live in poverty.

Participants for the three focus groups were obtained by posting signs in the respective shelters and/or help centers for each county. The only requirements for participation were that the participant be female 18 years or older residing in a designated Appalachian county. In order to be fully engaged in the discussion, the participant must be in or have been in a physically or emotionally abusive relationship.

A total of 22 participants meeting these criteria participated in the focus groups: 7 in Brown County, 8 in Columbiana County, and 7 in Monroe County. After the facilitator described the purpose of the study, discussed issues of confidentiality, and explained the women's right to abstain from participating and to excuse themselves from the group should they become upset or distressed, the participants signed consent forms. The discussion centered around three main questions: values and traditions impacting women's ability to seek help, services available for women, and services most needed by women (See Appendix B for all questions). Identical questions were asked of the women at all three focus group sites. The focus groups lasted approximately two hours each. Counseling services were offered at the completion of the focus group session for any women who needed it, and a handout listing area counselors was also made available to the women.

All responses were tape recorded, but only first names were used throughout the discussions so that no responses could be traced back to an individual. In addition to taping the discussion, the primary facilitator and the co-facilitator occasionally took notes. Upon completion of each focus group, the tapes were sent to a professional transcription service. Hard copies and soft copies were given to the researcher for analysis.

Results and Discussion

While idiosyncrasies were noted across each of the focus groups due to differing experiences with victim service providers and criminal justice providers in their communities, some common themes emerged. This report will focus on the common themes that emerged from each of the three topics of discussion: Appalachian culture and traditions impacting women's ability to seek and receive services; services that are available in Appalachian Ohio counties and how helpful they are; and services that are needed most by women in Appalachian Ohio.

Culture and Traditions

The majority of women participating in the focus groups grew up and lived most of their lives in rural communities. The traditions (e.g., family values, church values) which these women grew up in and are currently immersed, added to the small-town culture in which they reside impacts their perceived ability to seek help for domestic violence.

There is a strong community focus on the family unit. For a majority of the women, their livelihoods center on caring for their family and their home. One woman expressed that getting married and having a family was what she thought of as the 'fairy tale dream.'

Given the importance of the family unit, it is not surprising that there is an attitude that 'what goes on in the family stays in the family.' Many women expressed that there is a great deal of secrecy regarding abuse that occurs, and because of this, kids grow up thinking it is normal behavior. As one woman said, "[I] grew up believing that's what men did...it took me a long time to get to a point where I thought I even had the right to say, hey wait, I don't deserve this." When abuse does occur, fear of shame, rejection, and not being believed by the family can stand in the way of seeking help.

The small town lifestyle posed a challenge for many domestic violence victims. In such small communities women fear that word will get out about the abuse. In fact, one woman recalls her abuser stating, "You could not do any more to shame me and disgrace me than to have me thrown in jail." The woman went on to say that because they put arrest information in the newspaper, "this is a small town and everybody knows everything, so that is always going to be my fault."

With the emphasis on keeping problems within the family, it is expected that families serve as primary source of support in crisis situations. Indeed, many women reported attempting to turn to their own family or their husband's family to talk about the abuse. Because many women grew up in abusive households themselves, however, receiving help and emotional support from family members does not always occur. A few women who grew up in non-abusive households talked about the support they received from their parents. It was often the case that women who turned to their in-laws for support received criticism. These women found that the abuser's family often blamed the victim for the abusive behavior.

Because many women feel they cannot talk about the abuse to anyone inside or outside the family, it creates a sense of emotional isolation in the victim. This can be quite difficult for victims, as they overwhelmingly reported that being able to share their experiences with others who understood or empathized with their situation was validating.

Cultural traditions socialize the women to be the primary caregivers for their children, thus, few women worked outside the home on a consistent basis. The women seemed to talk more of how the abusive household impacted their children or their ability to provide for their children rather than how the abuse impacted them. A large number of women mentioned using counseling services for their children. On more than one occasion, counseling was sought because their children were behaving in ways similar to the abuser. Al-Anon and anger management classes were also used by children. Although not specifically stated, it appears as though the victims did perceive such services to be beneficial for the children.

The women talked about the need to protect their children and the difficulty they encountered when trying to keep the kids away from the abuser. Some of the women were court ordered to participate in visitation. In addition, women discussed the social pressure they were under to help their children maintain a relationship with their father. Also, in some cases, it was the children who expressed a desire to maintain a relationship with their father. Some women expressed guilt at the thought of taking the children away from their father, even if it was in the child's best interest. A few women noted that the fathers used psychological abuse tactics to turn the kids away from their mother.

Although the church plays an integral role in the lives of many in Appalachian Ohio, the women discussed very little about the role of the church in their lives and their abuse. Several mentioned using prayer and/or belief in God as a support in getting through the hard times. A few women remarked that their faith made it difficult to consider divorce as an option.

In such small communities, it is not unusual for criminal justice providers to be acquaintances (e.g., neighbors, friends, etc.) with the abusers. Women recalled law enforcement officers engaging in friendly conversations with the abuser, minimizing the abuse that had occurred, refusing to send the abuser to jail, or failing to remove the abuser from the house. This makes it particularly difficult for the victim to receive proper treatment. One woman's statement, "I think [the insignia on the police car] should say 'to serve and protect *who we choose*'" brought much agreement from participants. In two separate focus groups, women described law enforcement as an 'old boys club,' suggesting that the abuser will get the benefit of doubt regarding the abuse. In some cases, the officer threatened to charge the woman with domestic violence. For some of the women who have experienced this type of treatment by law enforcement, they adopt a 'why bother' attitude toward seeking future help, thus demonstrating that the criminal justice system is not working for them or for their children.

Helpfulness of available services

It was frequently mentioned (directly or implied) that the physical isolation and the economic conditions contribute to making it difficult to seek and receive services. Despite this, all women reported seeking services related to their abuse at one time or another³. High praise was given to those services especially created to meet the needs of domestic violence victims, such as shelters, counseling, and legal advocacy. The criminal justice system drew harsh responses from many women.

For the most part, programs are in place for the short-term assistance that domestic violence victims require. With the exception of Brown County, which does not have a shelter, Appalachian counties provide access to shelter, counseling, and basic criminal justice services. Unfortunately, the need generally outweighs the availability. These services aren't utilized by all, however. When asked why women did not use shelters, two reasons emerged. The primary reason was the lack of awareness that shelters even existed in their area. The secondary reason was the misconception of what a shelter is, what it's like, and what it can provide. One participant felt that women had a misconstrued view of a shelter as a "horrible place [like they've seen] on TV." This, combined with fear of the unknown, brought agreement from several women.

Counseling services are used by a surprisingly large number of women in the group. Services for the victims, the children, and the abuser were all reported to be used to varying degrees. Such counseling included Al-Anon, anger management, support groups, and individualized counseling. One woman reported not using counseling services because she had no health insurance, suggesting a general misconception that one must have health insurance to receive services.

³ Note that this sampling of women is not representative of all domestic violence victims in Appalachia. Because all participants signed up while at a center seeking services for themselves or for their children, these focus groups only captured the experiences of those who have sought help; their responses do not capture the experiences of those who, for whatever reason, have not sought services.

There were mixed reactions to the role of the church in aiding victims of domestic violence. Of the few who discussed seeking help from their church, one woman reported a positive experience, as her minister directed her to a shelter. Another minister justified the abuser's behavior by labeling him 'a sick man' who needs help, but she did not comment on whether the minister provided her with further direction.

A majority of women reported calling on law enforcement to report an abusive incident. The response of law enforcement and/or court personnel varied considerably, from being described as 'excellent' or 'well intentioned' to 'an awful experience'. Rather than focus on individual cases, a few common suggestions emerged that most influenced the victims' perception of the criminal justice system.

- Understanding of the situation. Law enforcement need to actively seek out the circumstances of the incident in order to hold the appropriate person accountable. They need to have a better understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence.
- Sensitivity to the situation. The women reported that law enforcement and court personnel need to have a better understanding of and sensitivity to victimization. They need to validate a woman's fears and concerns rather than be skeptical; they need to understand the physical and psychological consequences of abuse, and they need to be aware of the impact of the abuse on children. The women need to feel safer after law enforcement leave the scene. One woman said she was afraid to admit she was scared. "They [the cops] stood in the door. They asked me, "are you okay, ma'am?" They left. What was I gonna say? "no, I'm not okay, take this (expletive) with you"? I was scared to death."
- Prosecute protection order violations. Law enforcement need to understand the consequences of not following through with protection orders. Courts need to respond appropriately when protection orders are ignored.
- Weapon use. Law enforcement need to consider the presence of weapons, and either remove the weapons or remove the abuser's access to weapons (e.g., lock them in the safe and take away the key). Understand that if this is not done, the abuser may simply give the weapons to a family member or friend to hold, thus jeopardizing victim safety.
- Victim assistance. Law enforcement should be prepared to offer assistance to the victim, by notifying her of her legal rights, and also by giving her options to seek help. One woman stated that all law enforcement and court personnel should have contact information for domestic violence services available to hand out to women.
- Hold the abuser accountable for his actions. Prosecutors need to respond appropriately to charges of abuse. Holding the abuser accountable for his actions is a sign that domestic violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. In reference to taking legal action against the abuser, one woman replied, "...It's just not worth the hassle." Another woman described pressing charges as empowering. "I ended up kind of looking at the court service as I did it for me. Not for him...I was saying it wasn't okay that you did that to me...but at least I stood

up and said ‘You can’t do that’ and sent him that message regardless of what happened to me.”

Needed services

While basic immediate services to domestic violence victims appear to be in place (although more may be needed) in the Appalachian regions of Ohio, secondary services to assist women long-term are relatively non-existent.

- Housing. Although one county identified the need for basic short-term shelter services, the majority of women discussed the need for longer-term transitional housing and permanent housing to enable them to achieve independence.
- Financial stability/employment. While none of the women discussed their reasons for staying in the abusive relationship, it was clear that leaving was economically not feasible, especially for those with children. In fact, one woman cited she did not press charges against her husband because if he was in jail he couldn’t work. Many women will not consider leaving their current situation unless they have a way to support themselves and their children. In a society where the majority of women do not work outside the home, these women have no access to money. To achieve financial stability, several barriers need to be overcome:
 - Job assistance and training/education. Some of the women felt they were not able to obtain employment that would allow them to be financially independent without job training or education.
 - Transportation. Many of the women do not have access to reliable transportation of their own, and some do not even hold a driver’s license. Public transportation is not available or not convenient in these rural areas. One woman spoke about having to walk over a mile to work during the last trimester of her pregnancy, and the embarrassment of being sweaty when she arrived.
 - Childcare. Women with children talked about the difficulty they have in finding childcare. Even when childcare is available, it is generally too expensive for the wages the women would earn—typically minimum wage, entry-level positions. A few mentioned that leaving their children with the father is not an option, as they do not trust their husbands to watch the children.

Services specific to underserved populations are not available. Three women present at the focus groups were immigrants, and they spoke of tactics related to their citizenship status that the abuser used to gain power and control over them.

For those women for whom leaving the abuser is not feasible, and for those who did leave their abuser and were struggling to get by, they discussed the need for resources that would better their current living situation.

- Health insurance
- Money for medicine

- Money for home improvement
- Heat assistance

Top needs identified by women

At the end of the focus group sessions, the women were asked to come up with a list of the top needs of domestic violence victims. The women were then given ten sticky dots, representing ten stacks of money, that they could distribute in whatever manner they felt appropriate to the services they had identified, which were written on large sheets of paper taped to the wall. Table 1 summarizes this activity. *It is important to note, however, that it cannot be determined whether the women identified and placed dots next to those services in need of the most funding or those services most needed. The two do not necessarily go hand in hand, as a service could be highly needed but require relatively little money, or a service could be desirable but not a priority, yet require a great deal of money to operate.*

Consistent with the focus group discussions, for this activity the women identified needs in six primary areas: criminal justice services (62 dots), employment and related services (33 dots), housing services (29 dots), counseling and related services (24 dots), transportation services (15 dots), and education/awareness services (10 dots). Outside of criminal justice services, many of the top needs women identified were again those that assist women long-term (e.g., employment, transportation, housing), suggesting that critical services for the initial response to domestic violence victims, though limited, may already be in place.

The women overwhelmingly identified criminal justice services as the area in which the most emphasis be placed. However, two caveats need to be mentioned. First, one of the purposes of this study was to gain insight into the unique challenges faced by victims of domestic violence—criminal justice was purposely chosen as a focus area, given the nature of the grant funding the evaluation. In addition, related to the cautionary note above, it is difficult to interpret the values assigned to some of the criminal justice service areas of need identified by the women (e.g., laws to change around custody, improved court and law enforcement response, enforcement of protection orders), as these needs cannot easily be assigned a monetary value. Rather, these needs reflect areas where a change in attitude is needed, and perhaps this can best be accomplished through awareness and education for law enforcement and court personnel.

Employment and related services also generated a lot of interest. Financial stability is of great concern to the women, many of whom do not work outside the home or have access to the family's finances. Having access to those 'related' services, such as childcare and job training is a necessary component of securing employment, and as such cannot be ignored.

Housing services were also ranked as highly important. Note that participants from Brown County, which does not have a shelter, provided all twelve dots under shelter/safe housing. For the other counties which have shelters in place, money for longer-term housing was most important.

While counseling and related services were identified by women as a highly needed service, throughout the focus group discussions it was clear that several women had

utilized counseling for themselves and their children. It is unclear whether the women were indicating a need for more counseling services, or they were simply indicating that it is an important and much needed service. Interestingly, at the conclusion of two of the focus group sessions, the women thanked the facilitators for allowing them to come together to share their experiences. In fact, several of the women exchanged phone numbers and those in Monroe County expressed a desire for continued group meeting and support. These actions imply that support groups serve as the outlet that the women need to discuss their feelings and experiences—an outlet that is not always available within the family.

Transportation is an important service identified by many women. The need for transportation was almost always brought up as one barrier to obtaining employment. Transportation was also brought up in discussing women’s ability to receive services.

Finally, domestic violence education and awareness of domestic violence services were identified as important to women. A few commented that they were not aware that the abuse that was occurring in their lives (both emotional and physical) was not normal, as many of them grew up in households where abuse was present. They felt it was important to teach kids in school about abuse. Furthermore, knowledge of what services are available to domestic violence victims in their community is highly important. Several women commented that they found out about services by chance through a friend, a co-worker, or a physician. The women felt that first responders, such as law enforcement, should be required to offer information on what options victims of abuse have.

Table 1. Top service needs identified by women, arranged by type of service

Services needed	Total number of dots Number of groups reporting this need in ()
Counseling and related services	
Counseling/support groups for kids	7 (1)
Counseling for abusers	1 (1)
Counseling for adults (victims)	3 (1)
Al-Anon and other 12-step programs	3 (1)
Support groups for adults (victims)	10 (2)
Education/awareness services	
Education for kids about domestic violence	1 (1)
Knowledge/awareness of domestic violence services	9 (2)
Employment and related services	
Childcare	18 (3)
Job training and job assistance	14 (1)
Money for education	1 (1)
Transportation services	
Transportation/vehicles	15 (3)
Housing services	
More shelters/safe housing	15 (2)
Money for housing	14 (1)
Criminal justice services	
Laws to change around custody/visitation	4 (1)
Supervised visitation centers/assistance	3 (1)
Child support enforcement/protection	1 (1)
Training of law enforcement (non-specific)	6 (1)
Sensitivity training for law enforcement	8 (1)
Attorney training to help with divorce, custody, POs	13 (1)

Improved court response (e.g., no plea bargaining)	13 (1)
Improved law enforcement response	5 (1)
Enforcement of protection orders	9 (1)
Miscellaneous	
Assistance for women without children in the home	3 (1)
Cell phones	0 (1)
Emergency money assistance	3 (1)
Health insurance	4 (1)
Money for medicine	7 (1)
Housing improvement	6 (1)
Heat assistance	2 (1)
Safety (<i>note: not sure what this is in reference to</i>)	6 (1)

2002 Family Violence Needs Assessment

Methodology

In 2002, the Family Violence Prevention Center conducted a survey of domestic violence service providers to assess three priority areas: gaps in service, training needs, and information needs. Responses were received from 215 respondents (58.3% response rate), representing 73 of the 88 counties. In order to best assess the needs of different Ohio regions, the responses were grouped into four categories based on population: large counties (population 500,000 or more), medium counties (population 100,000-500,000), rural Appalachian counties (population less than 100,000 and federally designated 'Appalachian'), and rural non-Appalachian counties (population less than 100,000 not designated 'Appalachian')⁴.

The assessment looked at 23 needs falling with the priority areas of gaps in service, training, and information. Five close-ended responses were offered: 'don't have but need', 'have but need more', 'don't have, don't need', 'have sufficient', and 'not sure.'

Comparison of results

The Family Violence Needs Assessment surveyed service providers across all of Ohio, including those in the rural Appalachian regions. The focus groups targeted domestic violence victims and survivors residing in designated Appalachian counties. A secondary goal of this project was to assess how 'in-tune' service providers are to the needs of their clients by comparing and contrasting the results of the two studies. Due to the differing methods in which the studies were conducted (one producing quantitative results, the other producing qualitative results), direct comparisons between the two studies cannot be made; rather, the discussion below will focus on comparing and contrasting needs identified by service providers and victims as high priority. The needs are broken up into two categories: gaps in service and gaps in training.

Gaps in Service

Service providers in rural Appalachian counties are by far the most likely group to report having a complete lack of a service. In 10 of the 23 services described in the survey, the highest percentage of those reporting a need ('don't have but need' + 'have but need more') came from survey respondents in the rural Appalachian community. Furthermore, the highest percentage of responders reporting a complete lack of the service ('don't have but need') come from the rural Appalachian community. For 21 of the 23 services queried in the survey, rural Appalachian respondents reported the highest complete lack of service.

Participants in the focus groups identified the following key areas having gaps in service: criminal justice, employment (and related), housing, counseling, transportation, and education/awareness. Interestingly, a priority seems to be on the long-term, with the end goal of helping the woman achieve independence. The lack of discussion regarding short-term services such as crisis counseling and hotlines suggest that these services

⁴ Columbiana County is one of the 28 designated Appalachian counties in Ohio. However, Columbiana County's population is over 100,000 and thus, for the purposes of this analysis, is considered to be a "medium" county.

are either in adequate supply or are not in as much demand by these particular women as the long-term services. The exception to this is shelter services, which was identified as very important by one group lacking a shelter in their county.

The results of the needs assessment concurred with the victims' responses. Table 2 shows a summary of responses by county type. The percentages in columns two through five represent the summation of percentages indicating a need (i.e., 'don't have but need' + 'have but need more'). Column six identifies the type of county with the highest percentage indicating a complete lack of service (i.e., 'don't have but need').

Table 2. Gaps in services as a function of county type

Type of Need	% 'don't have but need' + % 'have but need more'				Highest %
	Large	Medium	Rural Appalachian	Rural Non-Appalachian	'don't have but need'
Housing	85.3	79.2	77.1	75.8	Rural App (20.0)
Transportation	67.6	67.6	73.5	65.0	Rural App (23.5)
Financial Assistance	65.7	68.1	76.4	57.4	Rural App (23.5)
Employment	67.6	61.8	72.7	49.2	Rural App (21.2)
Special Prosecution Units	68.8	53.4	67.7	49.2	Rural App (55.9)
Special Law Enforcement Units	75.7	67.1	80.0	63.3	Rural App (57.1)
Counseling	61.7	50.0	57.1	40.0	Large (2.9)
Education	54.5	51.5	51.4	34.5	Rural App (14.3)
Legal Advocacy	81.8	47.2	54.3	29.5	Rural App (5.7)
Court	61.7	41.1	60.0	23.3	Rural App (5.7)
Accompaniment					
Support Groups	50.0	41.4	51.4	41.7	Rural App (17.1)
Notification of	53.2	35.3	54.5	31.7	Rural App (21.2)
Defendant's Release					
Notification of	45.2	41.4	52.9	28.3	Rural App (14.7)
Hearings					
Other Advocacy	67.7	41.5	40.6	21.7	Rural App (6.2)
Emergency Shelter	73.5	41.1	40.0	29.6	Rural App (11.4)
Hospital	46.9	37.1	34.3	18.3	Rural App (8.6)
Accompaniment					
Help w/Impact	32.2	27.8	45.5	23.3	Rural App (18.2)
Statement					
Rape Crisis	54.6	16.7	40.0	28.8	Rural App (20.0)
Counseling					
Other Crisis	43.8	24.3	35.5	23.7	Rural App (3.2)
Counseling					
Information and	22.9	27.8	22.9	20.0	Large (3.0)
Referral					
24 Hour Hotline	24.2	16.5	28.6	21.6	Rural App (8.6)
Toll-Free Crisis	31.3	13.9	32.4	22.1	Rural App (11.8)
Hotline					
Other Crisis Hotline	25.9	15.3	26.7	17.0	Rural App (6.7)

Across all county sizes, including rural Appalachian counties, it is apparent that many of the immediate short-term needs (e.g., crisis hotlines and crisis counseling, information and referral, emergency shelter) are in place, but that more are needed.

Criminal justice. Despite the finding that short-term services are in place across most of Ohio, the single biggest exception to this, according to *providers*, is the need for specialized law enforcement units and specialized prosecution units. Over half of the providers in this Ohio region report having **no** such specialized personnel to assist domestic violence victims. This gap in service is not unique to Appalachia—the survey shows that over 40% of those in rural non-Appalachian Ohio also have no specialized law enforcement units or prosecution units. The percentage indicating a complete lack of this service decreases with an increase in county population, suggesting that most larger agencies have this service available.

Only a few women in the focus groups discussed the need for specialized criminal justice personnel. This is likely because few, if any, realize that there exist criminal justice personnel who specialize in domestic violence issues. The majority discussed the need to provide current personnel with training in domestic violence issues. In fact, training and related ‘improved responses’ (discussed in the following section) comprised the single largest gap in service for victims in terms of funding needs. One woman was sympathetic to the fact that law enforcement were ‘spread thin’ in her community; this, when considered in conjunction with the poverty experienced in the region, may partially explain the victims’ emphasis on training of current personnel as opposed to the creation of personnel specifically devoted to domestic violence.

Long-term needs. With a few exceptions, survey responders report that the majority of needs lie with those services that are meant to help women achieve long-term stability, such as transportation, housing, employment, and financial assistance. The Appalachian region is lacking in these service areas, with between 20%-25% of service providers reporting having no such services available to domestic violence victims. In the areas of transportation, financial assistance, and employment, rural Appalachian counties report the highest need for the service (‘don’t have but need’ + ‘have but need more’) when compared to other counties. It is important to note, however, that the need for such services is not unique to this region, but is found across all of Ohio.

Counseling. Several victims reported having used counseling in their community. Interestingly, while counseling services were frequently used, the women still identified this service as one in need of funding. This suggests the importance of counseling and perhaps the need for more counseling services not only for themselves but also for their families. Support groups were also viewed as very important, as this type of counseling service was identified as most in need of funding. In regions where no domestic violence support groups were available, the women suggested that such groups be initiated.

Survey respondents also reported that counseling services are in place in Appalachian Ohio, but over half of the respondents reported that more are needed. This falls in line with the reports given by victims. Slightly more than half of the survey respondents reported that support groups are lacking or are in need.

Awareness and Education. Domestic violence awareness and education was identified by focus group participants as an area in need of funding. Most victims reported initially

having a lack of awareness of domestic violence as a crime or as 'not normal.' They recommended that education about domestic violence should occur in schools. Additionally, a number of women reported being unaware of domestic violence services available to them in their community, and that many of the services are free.

Survey respondents also reported a need for education in Appalachian counties; however, it is unclear whether the target of the education is meant to be service providers or victims. Over 51% of respondents in Appalachian counties reported a lack of education or a need for more education. Over 14% reported being 'not sure.'

Participants in the focus groups did not discuss needed services for specific populations to any great extent. However, two subgroups are worthy of mention—juveniles and immigrants or individuals of an ethnic or cultural minority, as issues regarding these populations did arise during the course of the discussion.

In all focus groups, the women repeatedly voiced their concerns regarding their children's exposure to violence in the home. Counseling services specific to youth were used by many of the women in the group, and women also identified such services as being most in need. Survey respondents from Appalachian counties noted that services for juveniles⁵ are in existence in most areas (only 4.1% reported having no juvenile services), but 38.4% of those surveyed reported that more services for this population are needed. In fact, juveniles ranked second of all subgroups most in need of services.

The second subgroup that was mentioned by women in one focus group is immigrant population. Three women in attendance were immigrants who did not have English as their primary language, and they discussed the barriers they faced in understanding their rights as immigrants. Although no 'immigrant' question was asked in the survey, responders were asked to report on the need for services for those who do not speak English and for those who are an ethnic/cultural minority. Survey responders in Appalachian counties were not as likely to report a need for services for this population, however. Non-English speaking subgroups and ethnic/cultural minority subgroups did not make the top five list of victim groups in need of specialized services. While 8.3% of survey responders reported having no services for non-English speaking populations, only 5.6% reported needing more services for this group. Nearly 40% reporting having no need for such services. Likewise, 8.3% of responders reported having no services for ethnic/cultural minorities, but only 5.6% reported needing services for this group. One quarter of respondents reported having no need for services aimed toward ethnic/cultural minorities. It is important to note, however, that the percentage responding 'not sure' was high for both the non-English speaking population (38.9%) and for the ethnic/cultural minority population (38.9%), reflecting either a lack of knowledge of the services available or a lack of understanding of the question being asked.

Gaps in training

Victims overwhelmingly responded that training is needed for service providers in the criminal justice domain. Victims stated that law enforcement and court personnel are in

⁵ 'Services for juveniles' was one category in which survey respondents could respond; however, no mention was made as to specific juvenile services in the survey (e.g., counseling). The same holds true for the categories 'non-English speaking' and 'ethnic/cultural minority'.

need of domestic violence training, most notably sensitivity training and training on legal procedures, such as issuance and enforcement of protection orders. Additionally, they noted that funding should be put toward ‘improved response’ training, including child support enforcement/protection, improved law enforcement response, improved court response, enforcement of protection orders, and laws to change around custody/visitation.

Survey respondents concurred, indicating law enforcement as the top professional group in need of training (71.9% either don’t have but need training or have but need more training). This was followed closely by judges (64.5%) and other court staff (62.6%). The prosecutor’s office was also identified as in need of training (56.3%). The need for enhanced criminal justice response to domestic violence victims is further supported by the fact that law enforcement personnel are identified by victim services and by those in the legal system itself as the professional group most in need of training.

Survey respondents also agreed on the training topics most needed, identifying training on Ohio laws regarding family violence, on victim sensitivity, and on cultural sensitivity as the top three training needs (see Table 3). It appears that training on Ohio laws on domestic violence are offered in areas of Appalachian Ohio; however, more is needed. This is in contrast to sensitivity training, which nearly one-quarter to one-third of respondents identified as lacking.

Table 3. Subject matter training needs for rural Appalachian counties

TRAINING SUBJECT MATTER	Don't have but need	Have but need more	Not Sure
Victim sensitivity	35.1%	37.8%	10.8%
Cultural sensitivity	24.3%	37.8%	8.1%
Ohio laws regarding family violence	18.9%	62.2%	10.8%
Crisis intervention	11.1%	44.4%	11.1%
Victim advocacy	17.1%	48.6%	2.9%
Victim services	16.7%	41.7%	5.6%
Ohio model domestic violence protocol	11.1%	44.4%	19.4%
Other Ohio state government programs	17.1%	37.1%	22.9%
Crime victim compensation program	13.5%	40.5%	8.1%

Implications of the study/Future directions

The goal of conducting focus groups with victims in Appalachian Ohio was to understand the unique challenges and assets facing domestic violence victims. The results of the study should serve to inform service providers as well as local and state leaders so that knowledgeable policy and funding decisions can be made.

The women identified four areas where improvements are most needed in the area of domestic violence: long-term services, awareness of services, criminal justice response, and counseling. A fifth area, best termed 'household maintenance', identifies those things critically needed to sustain a household, such as heat assistance, household improvements, health insurance, and medicine; however, as these are not needs specific tied to domestic violence, they are not included here.

Long-term services

The focus groups revealed that there are not services available to help the victim long-term. Job assistance, education, transportation, and childcare issues hinder a woman's ability to obtain employment. Lack of transitional housing adds to the difficulty of achieving long-term stability. These are the services identified as extremely important to the women.

- Job assistance/training, educational opportunities
- Transportation: carpool, interest-free loan program for buying cars, car donation program
- Childcare opportunities
- Transitional and permanent housing and shelters in counties that do not have them

Awareness of services

Services for domestic violence victims can only be helpful if victims are aware of their existence. Several women remarked they were made aware of the programs only because an acquaintance mentioned them.

- Informational cards that law enforcement officers can discreetly give to the victim
- Media campaign to get the word out about available services
- Brochures on domestic violence to be handed out at local high schools

Criminal justice response

- Sensitivity trainings for law enforcement and for court personnel
- Look at OPOTA training requirements for law enforcement regarding domestic violence
- Legal advocate position within the prosecutor's office to assist women in maneuvering through the legal system, or train prosecutors in issues of divorce, custody, protection orders
- Training or documentation for law enforcement and court personnel regarding protection order enforcement

Counseling

- Support groups for victims of domestic violence and/or children
- Counseling services specific to children
- Counseling and other social services to underserved groups identified in the county (e.g., immigrants)

Appendix A
County Economic Status Classification

County Economic Indicators			
County Economic Levels	Three-Year Average Unemployment Rate	Per Capita Market Income	Poverty Rate
Distressed	150% or more of U.S. average	67% or less of U.S. average	150% or more of U.S. average
Transitional	All counties not in other classes. Individual indicators vary.		
Competitive	100% or less of U.S. average	80% or more of U.S. average	100% or less of U.S. average
Attainment	100% or less of U.S. average	100% or more of U.S. average	100% or less of U.S. average

County Economic Levels

Distressed

Distressed counties are the most economically depressed counties. These counties have a three-year average unemployment rate that is at least 1.5 times the national average; a per capita market income that is two-thirds or less of the national average; and a poverty rate that is at least 1.5 times the national average; OR they have 2 times the national poverty rate and qualify on the unemployment or income indicator.

Transitional

Transitional counties are classified as those that are below the national average for one or more of the three economic indicators (three-year average unemployment, per capita market income, and poverty) but do not satisfy the criteria of the distressed category.

Competitive

Competitive counties have a three-year average unemployment rate and a poverty rate equal to or better than the national average, and a per capita market income that is equal to or greater than 80 percent, but less than 100 percent, of the national average.

Attainment

Attainment counties have economic indicators (three-year average unemployment, per capita market income, and poverty) that are equal to or better than the national averages.

Appendix B
Focus Group Questions

(30 minutes) One of the biggest influences in our lives is our family. Members of our family serve as our role models. Growing up, we watch and learn how family members interact with one another and with people outside the family. The values and traditions that develop in our family and our partner's family affect us in many ways.

- 1a. How do the values and traditions of your family, your partner's family, or your community influence what is expected of you in an intimate relationship?
- 1b. How do the values and traditions of your family or community serve to strengthen the support you receive when the abuse occurs?
- 1c. What family values and traditions allow the abuse to go on?

(30-45 minutes) There are a number of services available within your community to help you if you are in an abusive relationship. Some services are used more than others. I want to know more about why women in your community decide to use or decide not to use the various services available.

Prompt with the following if they aren't brought up:

Shelters

Police

Court

- 2a. Tell me more about what reasons women in your community have for choosing to go to _____, or for not choosing to go to _____.
- 2b. How do you hope that the _____ can help you? Have they been able to help you in the way you hoped?

(30 minutes) We've been discussing what reasons women have for choosing to seek help from or choosing not to seek help from various service providers. This leads us to the final topic. Although there are many domestic violence services that women in your community need access to, there are limited resources to fund all these services. I want to get a better idea of what women in your community feel are the services that are most needed—that is, those that do the most good.

3. In your opinion, what are the top five needs that survivors of domestic violence have? If you have fewer than five to report, that is fine. [brainstorm a list based on everyone's top needs, and write list down on bulletin board. Possibly add to the list other obvious needs that for some reason are not brought up].

Now imagine that you have ten stacks of money. You can distribute these stacks in any way you choose to the services you came up with on the bulletin board. You can equally

distribute the stacks among several services listed, or you can give most of the stacks to one or a few services. I will give each of you ten sticky dots that represent the ten stacks of money. Put the dots next to the service or services you have chosen. If there is a service that is not listed, I will give you a post-it note on which you can write that service and post it on the board.

[spend remainder of 30 minutes discussing why some services received a lot of dots and why others did not]

4. Are there any other issues you wish to discuss?