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ICPSR 3603

Evaluation of Special Session Domestic Violence Court Processing in Connecticut, 1999-2000

Description

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Bibliographic Description

ICPSR Study No.: 3603

Title: Evaluation of Special Session Domestic Violence Court Processing in Connecticut, 1999-2000

Principal Investigator(s): Eleanor Lyon, University of Connecticut. School of Social Work

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Scope of Study

Summary: This study documented women's experience of enhanced services and advocacy in the context of the three special session domestic violence courts in Connecticut. The study conducted 60 in-depth interviews with women whose current or former partners were arrested for domestic violence and who appeared in one of the three special session courts. The questions were designed to elicit information from women about the meaning and context of intimate violence in their lives generally, their assessments of the risks and options available to them and their children from family, friends, and other institutions, their strategies for maximizing safety for themselves and their children, the meaning of the arrest incident in their overall experience of their relationship with their abusive partner, and the impact of the court experience on their plans, sense of options, and understanding of the abuse they had experienced.

Subject Term(s): advocacy, courts, domestic violence, intervention, prosecution, treatment, victim services, victims

Geographic Coverage: Connecticut, United States

Time Period: 1999 - 2000

Date(s) of Collection: 1999 - 2000

Unit of Observation: Individuals.

Universe: Women whose partners were arrested for domestic violence and arraigned at one of three special session family violence court sites in Connecticut from 1999 to 2000.

Data Type: survey data

Data Collection Notes: (1) The interviews on which this study was based were qualitative in nature. The analysis in the principal investigator's report was based on a combination of qualitative data and the data in this data collection. (2) The user guide, codebook, and data collection instrument are provided by ICPSR as Portable Document Format (PDF) files. The PDF file format was developed by Adobe Systems, Incorporated and can be accessed using PDF reader software, such as the Adobe Acrobat Reader. Information on how to obtain a copy of the Acrobat Reader is provided on the ICPSR Web site.

Methodology

Purpose of the Study: Despite over 20 years of attention to domestic violence by advocates, service providers, researchers, and policymakers, and dramatic increases in resources provided for criminal justice and community-based groups, gaps remain in knowledge about which types of interventions and collaborative partnerships offer the most effective strategies to enhance victim safety and hold offenders accountable. In particular, little is known about the impact of specialized domestic violence dockets, specialized prosecution units, and the expanded advocacy and treatment interventions they often provide, especially in the context of mandatory arrests that apply to misdemeanor offenses. This study documented women's experience of enhanced services and advocacy in the context of the three special session domestic violence courts in Connecticut. The following questions were addressed: (1) How do women whose partners were arrested for domestic violence in jurisdictions with special session courts experience the legal system's response? (2) What strategies most enhance women's sense of safety? (3) How (if at all) do African American, Latina, and Caucasian women whose partners have been arrested for domestic violence differ in their experience of legal system interventions? (4) How is the role of the victim advocate affected by increased resources and court emphasis on interventions and sanctions? and (5) What services do women want and receive when advocates have more time and resources available?

Study Design: This study conducted 60 in-depth interviews with women whose current or former partners were arrested for domestic violence and who appeared in one of the three special session courts. The specific questions for this study were based on previous interviews conducted as part of

Connecticut's ongoing evaluation efforts. Additional questions were developed in consultation with advocates and a victim advisory group. The advisory group was created with advocates' help, and was composed of six women whose partners' cases had been heard in the three special session domestic violence courts. The six women, along with two advocates, reviewed proposed questions, suggested additional items, and discussed the best strategies for approaching women about their possible participation. As a result of their suggestions, questions were added about women's experience with the police, as well as expanded questions about sources of support and risks. The questions were designed to elicit information from women about the meaning and context of intimate violence in their lives generally, their assessments of the risks and options available to them and their children from family, friends, and other institutions, their strategies for maximizing safety for themselves and their children, the meaning of the arrest incident in their overall experience of their relationship with their abusive partner, and the impact of the court experience on their plans, sense of options, and understanding of the abuse they had experienced. Women selected for this study were contacted by a research assistant who had received extensive training for this project. Arrangements were made for the interview to take place by telephone or in person in a safe place selected by the woman. The type of contact was the woman's choice. Safety issues were raised at this point in an effort to ensure that the interview process itself would not pose foreseeable risks to the woman. Without exception, the women preferred to be interviewed by telephone, and all agreed to have the interview tape-recorded. Two researchers independently coded the interviews where possible, and the initial differences were resolved through subsequent discussion.

Sample: Women who came to court on the day of arraignment were told by the advocates about the study and the $25 contribution for their time, and given a simple written description of it (in English or Spanish, as appropriate), developed in consultation with the victim advisory group. Women who did not come to court at that time were told about the interview when the advocates contacted them by telephone. With this approach, nearly every woman who became involved in the court process to any degree was informed about the study and their opportunity to participate. Women who were interested in participating provided information about the safest ways and times to contact them. The study's goal was to interview 20 Caucasians, 20 African Americans, and 20 Latinas. However, the interviews included 22 Caucasians, 25 African Americans, 11 Latinas, and 2 women of other race. Although the goal was not achieved precisely, the sample's diversity reasonably represents the range of women seen as victims of domestic violence in the courts.

Sources of Information: Data were collected through telephone interviews and personal interviews.

Description of Variables: Variables include court that handled the case, date of interview, victim's language, education level, employment status and history, race, information on financial assistance from government agencies, age, number of children, childrens' age and sex, where children were living at the time of partner's arrest for domestic violence, whether the victim witnessed physical violence between parents while growing up, whether anything happened as a result of that violence, effects of witnessing that violence, and whether the victim was threatened as a child. Other items focus on the nature of the relationship with the partner arrested for domestic violence, length of the relationship, whether the relationship had ended, whether the partner had any experience with domestic violence while growing up, whether the victim was living with the partner at time of the arrest, how long they had lived together, whether they were still living together after arrest, whether the partner helped support the victim and her family before the arrest, the importance of that support, whether the victim could find other sources of financial support, whether the person arrested was the father of the victim's children, whether he helped care for the children, whether the victim had a friend, family member, or community group to talk to when the relationship got into trouble, and whether this person or group could provide other kinds of assistance. Additional variables include the frequency of violence or threats of violence from the partner, childrens' exposure to the violence, whether the arrest was the first time the police got involved, the number of times police came in the past, who called the police, what the victim wanted the police to do, whether the victim was also arrested, the victim's satisfaction with the police response, whether the victim talked to a family relations counselor or family violence victim advocate, whether a protective order was given, whether the victim talked to a judge or prosecutor, whether people in court could have done anything to be more helpful, what had happened since with the case, whether the victim had talked any further with anyone from the court, whether she wished she had more contact with people from the court, whether she felt she was treated fairly by the court, whether there had been more trouble in the relationship, the victim's views on how couples should handle physical violence, whether police and courts should get involved, what their roles should be, whether the victim would call someone from the court if she felt threatened, and what kind of help she thought her partner or ex-partner needed.

Response Rates: Not available.

Presence of Common Scales: None.

Extent of Processing: Checked for undocumented or out-of-range codes.

Access and Availability

Note: A list of the data formats available for this study can be found in the summary of holdings. Detailed file-level information (such as record length, case count, and variable count) is listed in the file manifest.

Some instruments administered as part of this study may contain contents from copyrighted instruments. Reproductions of the instruments are provided solely as documentation for the analysis of the data associated with this collection. Please contact the data producers for information on permissions to use the instruments for other purposes.

Restrictions: To protect respondent privacy, certain identifying information is restricted from general dissemination. Users interested in obtaining these data must complete a Data Transfer Agreement Form and specify the reasons for the request. A copy of the Data Transfer Agreement Form can be requested by calling 800-999-0960 or 734-647-5000. The Data Transfer Agreement Form is also available as a Portable Document Format (PDF) file from the NACJD Web site at http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/Private/private.pdf (Link). Completed forms should be returned to: Director, National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, Institute for Social Research, P.O. Box 1248, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248, or by fax: 734-647-8200.

Original ICPSR Release: 2003-10-30

Dataset(s):

- DS1: Evaluation of Special Session Domestic Violence Court Processing in Connecticut, 1999-2000

Publications

Final Reports and Other Publication Resources: A list of publications related to, or based on, this data collection can be accessed from the study's download page on the NACJD Web site or through the ICPSR Bibliography of Data-Related Literature at http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ICPSR/citations/index.html. The list of citations includes links to abstracts and publications in Portable Document Format (PDF) files or text files when available.

Final reports and other publications describing research conducted on a variety of criminal justice topics are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS). NCJRS was established in 1972 by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), an agency of the U.S. Department of Justice, to provide research findings to criminal justice professionals and researchers. NCJRS operates specialized clearinghouses that are staffed by information specialists who supply a range of reference, referral, and distribution services. Publications can be obtained from NCJRS at NIJ/NCJRS, Box 6000, Rockville, MD, 20849-6000, 800-851-3420 or

301-519-5500. TTY Service for the Hearing Impaired is 877-712-9279 (toll-free) or 301-947-8374 (local). The URL for the NCJRS Web site is:

http://www.ncjrs.org/

NIJ Data Resources Program

About the DRP: The National Institute of Justice Data Resources Program (DRP) makes datasets from NIJ-funded research and evaluation projects available to the research community and sponsors research and training activities devoted to secondary data analysis. Datasets are archived by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan.

The NACJD maintains a World Wide Web site with instructions for transferring files and sending messages. Criminal justice data funded by the Department of Justice are available via the Internet at this site at no charge to the user. NACJD may be contacted at NACJD/ICPSR, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106-1248, 800-999-0960. The URL for the NACJD Web site is:

http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/