



**My Perspective:
The Subtle Differences Between...
a Stand-Alone Domestic Violence (DV) Program,
a Stand-Alone Sexual Assault (SA) Program,
and a Dual (DV & SA) Program**

by Melissa A. DeDomenico-Payne

From 1995-2003, I worked at a rural “dual” program—a program that offers both domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) services. I served as Executive Director there from 1997-2003. In 2003, I moved to a more metropolitan area, where I served as Executive Director of a stand-alone sexual assault agency for approximately a year and a half. In August 2004, I returned to rural life, where I am currently serving as Executive Director of a stand-alone domestic violence program.

The information I am submitting is completely based on my own perspective and experiences within these agencies. The purpose of this article is not to provide blanket generalities that may be applied to all domestic violence programs and sexual assault crisis centers in Virginia. Rather, it is my hope that this article will serve as one point of reference for others in the field -- that they may be able to be more aware of some of the similarities and differences that exist among stand-alone and dual programs.

Finances and Development

Money does not flood through our field. However, it has been my experience that money seems to come easier to domestic violence programs. There are more grants for which we can apply because our work extends into shelter services, services for children, services to address issues of poverty, etc. In the programs I've worked, donations (in-kind and monetary) have come much more regularly to the DV and Dual programs with much less effort because (in my opinion) people in the communities (particularly churches and civic groups) readily understand the tangible needs of shelter and food even if they don't understand everything about the issues. This is not to say that the SA program wasn't well supported – but it had taken the nurturing of relationships over many years (primarily through the prior director and board members) to develop the donor base that they had. In the Dual program, the sharing of resources (such as office space, supplies, support personnel who were cross-trained in sexual assault and domestic violence, etc.) certainly aided in a much more financially stable sexual assault program. By nature of having a residential facility, the DV and Dual programs had more staff. More staff in my case meant that I was able to focus more on the administrative aspects of the program than direct services, and thus devote time to implement internal administrative systems, develop the program, and support staff so that they could do their work.

Personnel

Overworked, undervalued, and underpaid? Actually, not really. Throughout my career, I have pushed for regular salary raises and better benefits for personnel. It has always been my logic that personnel will come and go, but I never wanted them to make their decision to leave primarily based on money (or lack thereof). In the Dual program, I sometimes had to argue a little more to get people to understand the difficulty of the work, the qualifications of staff, and why we would want to pay our staff well. At the SA program, the board seemed to understand and value the staff, although they didn't always understand the difference between the work of private therapists compared to the work of our advocates.

In all three agencies, I observed the “family” atmosphere of staffing. Staff are generally passionate about their work, hungry to learn, and willing to work toward creating an environment that is enjoy-

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able and rewarding. I work very hard at being available to staff, treating them with respect, and creating opportunities for fun and growth. Because of the issues we face, the work is difficult and it is critical that staff remain a support network to each other. In the Dual program, I encouraged the staff to work together holistically for the benefit of the clients, rather than strictly dividing the staff according to their sexual assault or domestic violence funding affiliations.

One challenge that I faced at the SA program revolved around increasing the racial diversity of staff. This was interesting in that the community in which it exists is much more racially diverse than the rural areas in which I've worked, and yet it was in the rural areas that I had more success in this arena. It was my understanding that this was an historical issue for the agency and I am not sure if it is because of the area, the issue, or some other factors. I definitely had a greater number of qualified applicants apply for jobs within the SA program than the other two agencies – and I am sure that this was related to the region (i.e. a local university and a tight job market). But it was difficult to recruit qualified applicants who were of more diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Board

In my opinion, the DV and Dual programs were at an advantage by having to adhere to certification standards (created by domestic violence programs and the state coalition). Certification was helpful in mandating critical organizational evaluations, such as regular review of by-laws, long-range planning, and board training. Increasing the diversity of board members was a challenge in all three organizations. This requires constant attention and as a director, you have an obligation to bring up the

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diversity issue even if your board does not. Term limits are especially important for boards to change the dynamics within the group and bring fresh ideas to the table. The three organizations within which I have worked struggled with issues of racial diversity, personal diversity (i.e. groups of friends within the boards), and professional diversity (i.e. more human-service-related folks than business people). Working with a board requires building positive, professional relationships within the structure of systems that will maximize everyone’s strengths to the benefit of the organization. Like any relationship, your relationship with your board will see its cycles of difficulty. However, time, effort, and skill can pay off in this arena.

Volunteerism

While all three organizations were spawned from volunteers, the SA program was the most successful at securing a large direct service volunteer base, in part because the SA program had made “Volunteer Coordinator” an integral position within the staff. There was a standard training curriculum, regular training sessions, an organized structure of volunteerism, and a large pool of willing volunteers supplied by university students (which posed a challenge when the university was not in session). When the DV and Dual programs evolved into more residential services, direct service volunteerism dwindled. The bulk of the Dual program’s volunteerism was at the thrift store. My hypothesis is that residential services require much more face-to-face intense work than the average volunteer wants to commit. And both of these rural programs have had only marginal success in securing interns from the available local community colleges. In consideration of the SA program’s success at maintaining an active volunteer base, I have retained a Volunteer Coordinator position at the DV program where I now work. I believe that it takes a significant amount of

staff time and attention to foster a successful volunteer program.

Community Coordination

I could clearly see the success in all three organizations in coordinating with all of the typical community systems. The DV and Dual program, however, were often dealing with residential clients who had many needs in addition to their domestic violence or sexual assault issues. As a result, I found that generally, staff at the DV and Dual programs were more familiar with a wider variety of community resources and could easily brainstorm many different resources to help a client. At the SA program, clients would often come for services and would not necessarily have the need to be referred to other community agency services.

Services

When I came to the SA program, I was in awe of what they were offering. A joint project with the local DV shelter involved a group of teens facilitating sexual violence prevention in middle and high schools through the forum of theatre (VIVA). The CAP program brought child abuse prevention to local area schools. In the rural community of the Dual program, I had been told that the school wouldn’t want to touch any project that mentioned “sex” or “violence.” I presented on occasion to the schools there, but gained entry primarily through personal contacts. The DV program and its sister sexual assault agency have implemented a joint educational program in a local county, but it has not quite reached the level of VIVA. I’ve also presented to some of the local area schools, but again on a very sporadic basis. I guess we’re back to money again – there seems to have been more money available for sexual assault prevention and education than domestic violence prevention and education. My current DV program received DELTA funding for do-

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mestic violence prevention, but through that we are working toward building a faith community project.

The SA program also was incredibly cutting edge in its service delivery to sexual violence survivors. It would try many different approaches with clients during their individual sessions. It contracted with local counselors to provide periodic support groups to men. At their facility, the SA program instituted a “healing garden” for clients. It had developed a very organized format for the vigil each April that highlighted the poetry, music, and statements of survivors. The SA program, unlike the DV and Dual programs, was organized by NOW and had a much more feminist, progressive, and social justice focus intertwined with its services. The DV and Dual programs are progressive in their own right, but seemed to take a more centrist approach to political issues – which can be a good survival technique for programs in more rural and conservative areas.

Public Awareness and Understanding

One thing that was extremely surprising to me when I worked at the SA program was that, after 30 years, many people still couldn’t grasp that the SA program where I worked was a different organization from the local DV program, and that they each addressed separate issues. This misunderstanding went all the way to the local government, who just a few years ago during a funding cycle asked questions that were shelter-related. The community as a whole seemed obviously more aware and sensitive to the issues. While there, I maintained that if each organization could successfully sustain community support to remain separate, there would be valuable argument to remaining separate entities. Sometimes, however, I found that we were faced with donations, questions about services, and clients that were obviously more appropriate for the shelter because people had confused us.

In the region where I now work, the DV program has been in existence long before its sister sexual assault agency in a neighboring county. I’m sure that the geographic division helps somewhat with having the public see us as different entities, but we probably add some confusion with our very visible joint projects. I am fairly confident that a sexual assault crisis center could not have been created or survived separately from the domestic violence program in the locality that housed the Dual program where I used to work. The community wouldn’t have been ready for it. I found on a recent trip to the General Assembly that one legislative aide referred to visitors from the sexual assault program as people from that “sex” group. There are little pockets of misunderstanding everywhere.

Facility

All three agencies were blessed to be able to acquire facilities for their programs. The Dual program started in an old house and eventually renovated the two floors above its thrift store for transitional housing and shelter. The DV program where I now work has three buildings – two owned for transitional housing and shelter and one rented for office space (although we soon anticipate building new office space). Because of the sheer numbers of people going through the facilities, we face very similar on-going issues: lice, rodents, maintenance, pipes freezing, sewer system back-ups, contagious diseases and mass sickness, etc. It’s definitely not a place for someone who needs a nice, quiet, cushy office job. Because the SA program used its facility primarily during the day-time (and clients did not live there), the maintenance issues were much less. Once we had a giant lizard on our porch, but other than that we were generally free of rodents and other issues that face shelters. However, we did find that once we had our

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Open and Willing

The process of creating a new coalition

By Kristi VanAudenhove, on behalf of the three Co-Directors

*I am open; and I am willing
To be hopeless would seem so strange
It dishonors those who go before us
So lift me up to the light of change**

**All lyrics by Holly Near*



Holly Near's song became our anthem in the final years of the transformation of Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault and Virginians Against Domestic Violence into the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

As the Directors responsible for keeping the process moving in a positive direction we were repeatedly reminded of the importance of remaining open and willing—and of honoring those who went before us in our respective coalitions, and in the movements to end sexual and domestic violence as a whole.

Bernice Johnson Reagon, musician, historian and leader, served as the catalyst to bring the two coalitions to the table to consider the challenges and opportunities of building a united coalition together. In a keynote speech at our Annual Training Retreat, Dr. Johnson Reagon shared her perspective on the Civil Rights movement in the United States. She spoke of the importance of building coalitions to affect social change, and of the inherent conflict that is a part of coalition building. She encouraged all of us to move beyond the conflict in the interest of achieving change—not to ignore it, or avoid it, but to embrace it as a vital part of our work.

Those words opened the door to viewing the 20-year history of collaboration and conflict between the sexual assault coalition and the domestic violence coalition in an entirely new way.



“Early on we agreed that we were not interested in simply joining our two organizations together. Rather, we decided to examine the lessons we had learned separately and together and to apply those to creating a new organization.”

The leadership of each coalition came to the table to consider first whether or not, and then how, to build a new, broader and more powerful coalition to carry forward the work of ending sexual and domestic violence in Virginia.

*May the children see more clearly
May the elders be more wise
May the winds of change caress us
Even though it burns our eyes*

Change is often painful and difficult, and the transformation process was no exception. Throughout the process individuals and groups were challenged to explore their values and beliefs and to hear the values, beliefs and concerns of others who shared nothing more than a belief that ending sexual and domestic violence is important. There was disagreement within each coalition and between the two coalitions on virtually everything else: what we

should be doing to end sexual and domestic violence, why it is important to end sexual and domestic violence, and how we should work together to achieve that end.

Although there were no children at the table (as participants!), there were women, and a few men, of all ages. Staying at the table as we worked toward a clear vision and wise decisions was perhaps the single most important change we made.

1: “Transform” vs. “merge”

A number of themes emerged as we worked together. The first was related to the decision to frame our work together as a transformation. Early on we agreed that we were not interested in simply joining our two organizations together. Rather, we decided to examine the lessons we had learned separately and together and to apply those to creating a new organization. The only thing that each coalition agreed to up front was that everyone currently employed in either coalition would be offered a job in the new coalition (although not necessarily the same job they had been doing!). The decision to transform rather than merge, and the willingness of members and staff of both organizations to participate openly in a process with no guaranteed outcomes made it possible to develop shared values and goals. Past successes and past mistakes went from being a part of the “rivalry” between “sister coalitions” to information we considered in the context of all of the possibilities for the future.

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2: Broaden the coalition

A second theme that emerged was the importance of taking this opportunity to truly broaden the coalition of individuals and agencies working together to end sexual and domestic violence. Funds were dedicated to transformation to ensure that the true diversity of individuals doing this work could come to the table as participants and as leaders. At each meeting we paid attention to gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, the place each person called home and the groups each person was affiliated with to try to ensure that all voices were being heard. It wasn’t easy to hear young women speak about not being taken seriously, to hear older women share their fear of being “put out to pasture,” to hear Latinas respond honestly to being invisible when lumped into a “women of color” category, to hear men speak of the impact of feeling “suspect” in the group, or to hear many, many others speak of instances of being marginalized in their attempts to be a part of coalition work. These important discussions moved the group to consider not only issues of diversity in coalition membership and leadership, but how to truly

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embrace anti-oppression work as a fundamental part of our work to end sexual and domestic violence.

3: Equity for sexual violence services

A third theme was equity for sexual violence. From the outset everyone acknowledged that more resources were available to address domestic violence in both the private and public sectors, due in part to the fact that the public is more comfortable talking about domestic violence. Everyone was not of one mind about how to address that inequity. Did we need to commit to equal resources (funding, staff, projects) for sexual violence and domestic violence from the outset? Did we want to institutionalize any system that continued the “competition” between the two issues? How could we move forward most effectively to address sexual violence? These discussions yielded a solid, and we believe, enduring commitment to equity in our work to end both sexual and domestic violence.

4: Honor our roots

A fourth theme focused on honoring and reclaiming our roots, including valuing the voices of survivors, and accepting leadership from community Sexual Assault Crisis Centers and Domestic Violence Programs. As we talked about how we had grown away from these roots it became clear just how important they would be in nurturing the new Alliance.

5: Be the change we wish to see

One last theme that carried into all of our work was the adage to “be the change we wish to see in the world.” As we considered the structure of governance and staff, as we talked about strategic priorities, as we wrote by-laws and personnel policies we struggled with issues of power, roles, relationships and our vision. We agreed to make decisions by consensus and we structured shared leadership at each level of the organization. We made a commitment to a continuous learning and teaching process to support our values. We built in accountability.

*Give me a mighty oak to hold my confusion
Give me a desert to hold my fears
Give me a sunset to hold my wonder
Give me an ocean to hold my tears*

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Celebrating our first year

In 2005, the Alliance celebrated its first year of operation as a new organization. It has been a remarkable year. The combined staff has gone through the requisite ups and downs associated with bringing two very different cultures into a one new culture—across three offices in different cities in the state! The new Governing Body has struggled with providing leadership while learning and respecting the consensus process. Our allies have spent the entire year learning to say and spell our exceptionally long name. And a few of the things we have accomplished include:

- Expanding our prevention work, holding the first ever statewide conference on preventing sexual and domestic violence and more than doubling the resources devoted to statewide prevention efforts;
- Forming a new partnership with campus sexual and dating violence prevention programs that will include a campus awareness campaign and on-line dating violence resource center (funded by the Verizon Foundation);
- Developing a five-year public policy agenda that addresses the social conditions that perpetuate sexual and domestic violence, working toward equality, peace, and social justice;
- Building consensus amongst the membership in opposition to a proposed constitutional amendment in Virginia that would threaten the safety of sexual and domestic violence victims who are not married;
- Expanding the Training Institute to include sexual violence, offering two 3-day Sexual Violence Training for Trainers, adding four new faculty members specializing in training on sexual violence, and offering a 1-day regional training on Key Elements in the response to Sexual Violence as part of an annual training calendar that included more than 50 sexual

and domestic violence training events;

- Beginning a process of defining comprehensive services to address sexual violence and assessing current gaps in Virginia’s response;
- Developing more than a dozen new resources, including fact sheets on the impact of sexual violence on several underserved populations;
- Conducting a 5-year evaluation of VAdata, Virginia’s sexual and domestic violence services data collection system;
- Combining standards for sexual and domestic violence services and developing a new process for supporting services that meet those standards at the community level; and
- Moving forward together on our work to increase the availability, accessibility and effectiveness of services to people with disabilities, with a focus on victims of sexual and domestic violence who also have mental health or cognitive disabilities (funded by the Altria Group).

All of this would not have been possible without a great deal of support and collaboration.

The process of transformation was facilitated by some truly outstanding women and men: Nancy Ross, Jim Boyd, Debby Tucker, Sandy Barnett, and members of each of the coalitions that formed the Alliance. The National Network to End Domestic Violence provided support for peer-to-peer technical assistance that allowed us to learn from other coalitions and to bring their wisdom and experience to Virginia. Members of Congress who supported the Violence Against Women Act made new funding available for state coalition work—and in Virginia we applied a portion of that funding to this process. Our primary funders in Virginia, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Department of Health helped ensure a smooth transition from the former coalitions to the new Alliance.

And, of course, the women and men throughout Virginia who are members of the Alliance and were members of VAASA and VADV did the hard work to lift us all to the light of change.

Thank you also to all of the wonderful musicians who inspire us in our social justice work, and in this case, to Holly Near and Bernice Johnson Reagon!



Kristi VanAudenhove is currently Co-Director of the Alliance, was previously Co-Director of Virginians Against Domestic Violence for twelve years, and has been involved in the movement(s) to end sexual and domestic violence for over 20 years.

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response to violence against women while maintaining an understanding of violence against women as a form of hierarchical oppression (i.e., sexism, racism, etc.). In most communities, both sexual assault and domestic violence programs have become part of the formal social service delivery system.

It was inevitable that in the process of co-opting criminal justice to adopt an understanding of violence against women as a crime, that sexual assault and domestic violence programs would also have to adopt an image that was more palatable to those in criminal justice. As older sexual assault and domestic violence programs have taken their place in the community response system, new programs have developed from a social service, charity and/or religious orientation. Many domestic violence shelters are operated by various Catholic orders, such as the Sisters of Mercy. Sexual assault programs are often operated by mental health or community action agencies. And, board members of many domestic violence and sexual assault programs are frequently wealthy philanthropists whose ideological and/or political orientation may or may not be consistent with that of the staff.

As with many other comparisons of the sexual assault and domestic violence movement, local domestic violence programs have probably become more accepted than rape crisis centers as part of the service delivery system. While this may be a success as far as serving victims of domestic violence, it remains to be seen as to whether programs will use their clout to insist on additional progressive reform of practices and beliefs.

“It is disappointing to those in the sexual assault movement that our sisters in the domestic violence movement, who have more resources and voice, do not advocate for more equity for sexual assault services and victims.”

support between the two movements, it will take work for the two movements to join as one. This is not to say that it can not, or should not, be done. If equitable organizations can be created with a foundation of trust, it only makes sense that our combined efforts will make for stronger advocacy on behalf of the survivors we serve.

I have some reservations. My own experience in dual programs has shown me that domestic violence services will be prioritized over sexual assault services. Across the country, some of the strongest sexual assault programs and state coalitions are stand-alone programs.

Only in stand-alone rape crisis programs have I seen fully staffed sexual assault services with short and long term support for survivors, civil and criminal justice advocacy, and expansive prevention and education.

It is disappointing to those in the sexual assault movement that our sisters in the domestic violence movement, who have more resources and voice, do not advocate for more equity for sexual assault services and victims. It is painful to watch more funds being allocated to batterers than to victims of sexual assault. And, it is easy to be skeptical of domestic violence programs that now want federal sexual assault funding but would not work for state funding.

“If we truly understand sexual assault and domestic violence to be two parts of the same phenomenon— violence against women— then it makes sense for us to work together to end violence against women.”


I encourage sexual assault and domestic violence programs and state coalitions to actively work together toward a common agenda. As a true gesture of sincerity, that agenda must include more funding equity for sexual assault services. When a legislator indicates they do not understand the difference between sexual assault and domestic violence, or that these are two different programs, our

allies in the domestic violence program need to take responsibility for clarification. There must also be a national sexual assault coalition to provide a voice for sexual assault programs and sexual assault survivors. I believe that sexual assault and domestic violence programs, working together in true collaboration and coalition, can achieve our mutual goal of

To Stand Alone or Together

If we truly understand sexual assault and domestic violence to be two parts of the same phenomenon— violence against women— then it makes sense for us to work together to end violence against women. However, given the history of inequity and lack of

ending violence against women. As this collaboration grows, many organizations may find it natural to merge resources.

As VAWA was being reauthorized this year, it was encouraging to see us standing together to expand the Act and include more funding for sexual assault services. Even in this collaborative effort, however, there was conflict between sexual assault and domestic violence advocates over whether funding in the Rural Grant program should have 40% designated for sexual assault programs. If we are to work together, combine programs and coalitions, we can not work against each other. We must have some way of deciding how to resolve policy conflicts. The reauthorization of VAWA may be an excellent opportunity for our path together to begin. 

Notes:

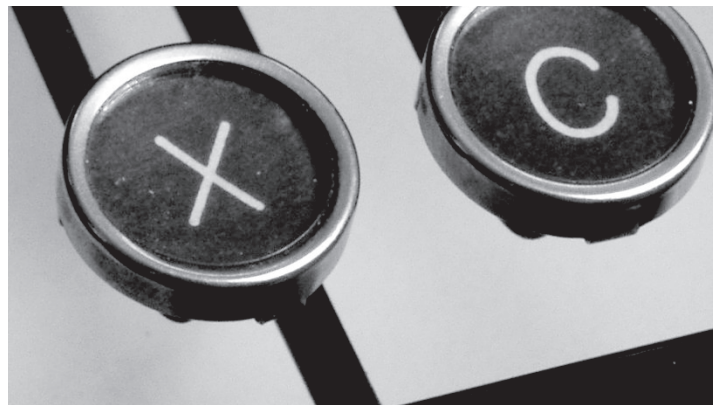
¹The amount of state funding for domestic violence programs was over \$10 million.

²During the reauthorization of VAWA in 2000, RAINN lobbied against federal funding for a national sexual assault hotline, an act that added to the negative feelings toward the organization.

³VAWA 2000 created two new programs that provide funding for the children of battered women—Safe Havens Supervised Visitation and Exchange Program, and the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Program. No VAWA funding may be used for child victims of sexual abuse except under the Rural program which can serve child victims if the parent is a victim of domestic violence.

⁴An example of coercion includes being told that if the female does not provide sex, the male will find another girlfriend, or if she does not “put out,” she can “get out” and walk miles home in the dark. Neither involves physical force.


Lacey M. Sloan, Ph.D., MSSW, has worked in the sexual assault movement since 1985. She has worked in two dual domestic violence and sexual assault programs, and in one stand-alone sexual assault program. She served on the board of directors of the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault. About this article, she says, “I am committed to ending violence against women, and while my focus has expanded to include domestic violence, I admit my bias is with sexual assault programs.”



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own facility, we were again confused with the local DV shelter.

In Conclusion

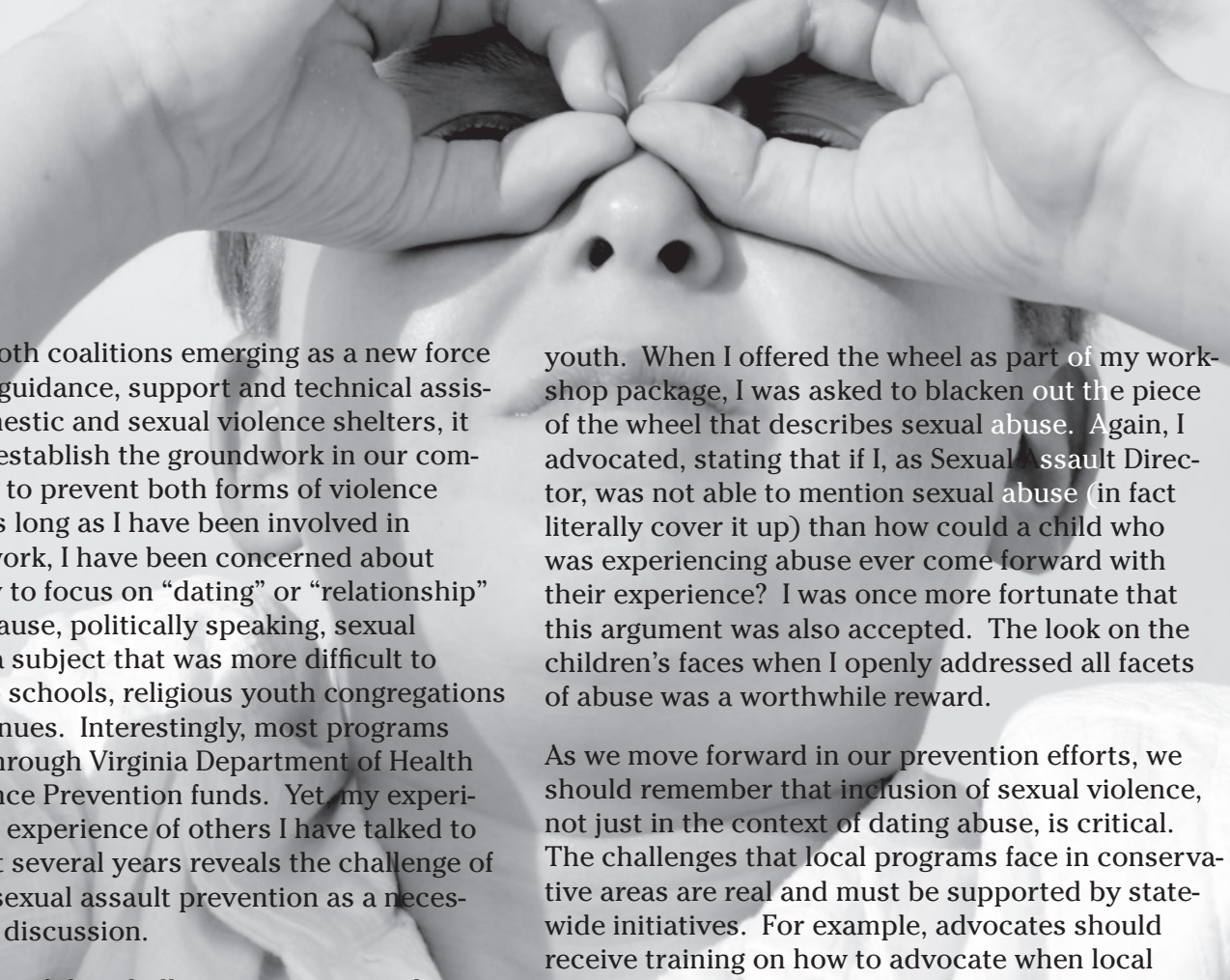
You may be asking what my logic was in moving from one type of program to another. I had many personal factors and preferences influencing my decision – too many to list in this article. I needed a life change in my move from the Dual program. In moving to a stand-alone sexual assault crisis center, I certainly was looking forward to the non-residential aspect of that program. But frankly, I missed “shelter” and began exploring other career options that would not be as easy for me in a metropolitan area. Thus, I moved to a rural DV program. From each agency, I have gained incredible insight into the issues, wonderful friends, and a deeper sense of self that probably would never have been afforded to me if I would have gone into another field. It is simultaneously challenging and rewarding. 

Melissa was born in Mount Kisco, New York, but has lived most of her life in Virginia. She began as a volunteer intern in the field in 1995 and then served as Executive Director of the Warren County Council on Domestic Violence (a dual domestic violence program and sexual assault program) from 1997-2003. She served as Executive Director of the Sexual Assault Resource Agency in Charlottesville from 2003 to 2004. She became Executive Director of Services to Abused Families, Inc. (SAFE) in Culpeper in August of 2004. She has served for several years as Secretary for Virginians Against Domestic Violence and Treasurer for Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault. She lives in Reva, VA. with her husband, her 7-year-old son and newborn daughter. She also has three older step-sons.

Looking Ahead

The importance of balancing prevention efforts

By Tammi Slovinsky, MPA




With both coalitions emerging as a new force in providing guidance, support and technical assistance to domestic and sexual violence shelters, it is critical to establish the groundwork in our combined efforts to prevent both forms of violence equitably. As long as I have been involved in prevention work, I have been concerned about the tendency to focus on “dating” or “relationship” violence because, politically speaking, sexual assault was a subject that was more difficult to interject into schools, religious youth congregations and other venues. Interestingly, most programs are funded through Virginia Department of Health Sexual Violence Prevention funds. Yet my experience and the experience of others I have talked to over the past several years reveals the challenge of introducing sexual assault prevention as a necessary topic of discussion.

Two examples of this challenge come to mind, although there are many others. While talking with one youth pastor who welcomed the prospect of a discussion on healthy relationships with youth under his supervision, he retorted when I mentioned sexual abuse as a component of the teen dating violence wheel. In fact, he linked sexual abuse with abstinence, stating that those discussions are not permitted. I responded by reminding him that the goal of my presentation was to prevent forced sexual activity, which is what we all hope to accomplish. Fortunately in that case, my argument was accepted as valid.

On another occasion, I met with two leaders of a Muslim congregation, who wanted me to present a workshop on healthy relationships to over 100

youth. When I offered the wheel as part of my workshop package, I was asked to blacken out the piece of the wheel that describes sexual abuse. Again, I advocated, stating that if I, as Sexual Assault Director, was not able to mention sexual abuse (in fact literally cover it up) than how could a child who was experiencing abuse ever come forward with their experience? I was once more fortunate that this argument was also accepted. The look on the children’s faces when I openly addressed all facets of abuse was a worthwhile reward.

As we move forward in our prevention efforts, we should remember that inclusion of sexual violence, not just in the context of dating abuse, is critical. The challenges that local programs face in conservative areas are real and must be supported by statewide initiatives. For example, advocates should receive training on how to advocate when local leaders reject inclusion of sexual abuse discussions. We should also receive clear guidance and support on the parallels and differences between domestic and sexual violence. Our forces are now joined... let’s use that power in a positive way to bring both issues to the prevention table...equally. 

Tammi Slovinsky has nearly ten years of experience in providing crisis intervention and advocacy to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. She is currently the Coordinator of Loudoun County’s Domestic Abuse Response Team. She has provided training to a wide variety of allied professionals and has expertise in teen dating violence and sexual assault, child sexual abuse and providing support to secondary survivors.

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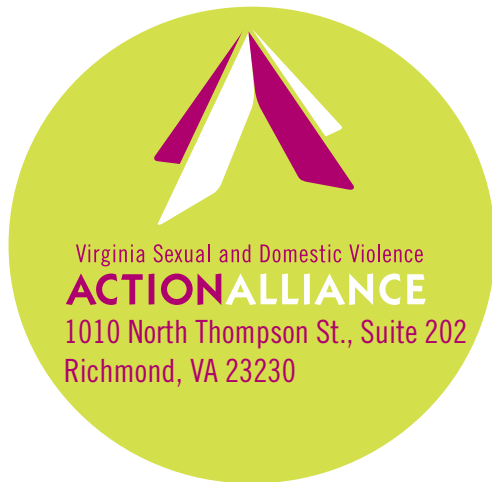
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