

NHCADSV History

The history of the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence reveals the hopes and determination of New Hampshire activists who have contributed to the Coalition's nearly 30 years of steady progress: from the regional reorganizing of the 1970s to today's cohesive statewide network of services, education, and advocacy. Started at the height of the women's movement, today's New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is a statewide network of 14 independent member programs committed to ending domestic and sexual violence. The Coalition continues this tradition in ongoing work to educate and promote social change by holding societal systems accountable for their responses to domestic and sexual violence and stalking.

In 1977, New Hampshire women formed the New Hampshire Coalition on Battered Women and distributed its first press release to counter a claim made by the New Hampshire Governor's Commission on the Status of Women under Gov. Meldrim Thompson, that "feminism causes battering."

In 1978, the Coalition obtained a grant from the New Hampshire Council on the Humanities to fund a statewide conference targeting partner abuse. After this conference, the Coalition worked with NH Legal Assistance to formulate domestic violence legislation for New Hampshire. By the end of the '70s, the Coalition was gaining momentum: new local service groups were forming around the state; advocates were gaining footholds in the legislative process; and funding was beginning to be secured.

The early '80s brought important accomplishments: the Coalition changed its name to the New Hampshire Coalition Against Family Violence; received its first operating funds (a \$32,000 grant); and hired its first staff member.

By the early 1980s, the Coalition was legally incorporated, having by then established its purpose, philosophy, and points of unity among its member groups. While the internal structural work of the Coalition was under way, advocacy work continued – including the establishment of a speakers' bureau in collaboration with the state's Commission on the Status of Women, which under new state leadership had come a long way from its previous "feminism causes battering" stance.

Simultaneously, work began on marital rape legislation made necessary by the fact that state law did not recognize sexual violence within a marriage to be rape. New Hampshire's Domestic Violence Grant Program legislation was crafted, allocating funds from the state marriage license fees to address domestic violence.

In 1981, the Domestic Violence Grant Program took effect, as did the repeal of the spousal exception to the state sexual assault statute. By the end of 1981, the Coalition signed a contract with the NH Division of Welfare to become the coordinating agency of the Domestic Violence Grant Program. This became the Coalition's first contact with the state to manage funds dispersed to its statewide member groups.

By the mid-80s, the Coalition collected statewide statistics on the incidence of domestic and sexual violence, printed its first brochure, and changed its name to the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Nationally, the first federal domestic violence funding legislation, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, was passed. The Federal Victims of Crime Act was enacted, establishing an allocation of federal funds to the states for addressing the needs of crime victims.

Following the passage of the federal legislation, federal funds began flowing to the states. By the spring of 1986, the Coalition was awarded a contract to manage the Family Violence

Prevention and Services Act funds. Funding from the Victims of Crime Act allowed the Coalition's participating member groups to hire staff to address sexual assault issues.

By the late 1980s, the Coalition began work on state legislation to prevent batterers from getting joint custody; convened a second successful conference, Building the Movement to End Violence Against Women; began participating in the national domestic and sexual violence coalitions; contributed to revisions of the state domestic violence statute; secured increased funding from marriage license fees; and celebrated its 10th anniversary.

The 1990s brought significant changes. In response to the highly publicized case of elderly sexual assault survivor Florence Holway, an ad hoc legislative committee worked to reform the state's sexual assault statutes. This activism led to major revisions in New Hampshire's laws addressing sexual violence. Among the changes were the development and implementation of a statewide curriculum to train law enforcement and prosecutors in dealing with sexual assault.

The early 1990s also brought significant internal restructuring for the Coalition. A community board of directors was established in 1992 to enable more objective oversight of Coalition operations. With this change came a comprehensive development of program standards.

In 1994, spurred in large part by the highly publicized case of domestic violence survivor Susan Sarno, state leadership, under the direction of then-Governor Stephen Merrill and former Attorney General Jeffrey Howard, became more responsive to the issue of domestic violence and established the Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence. Further funding for domestic and sexual violence services flowed through the Coalition thanks to the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1996. Rural needs were given attention for their particular challenges with VAWA awards, that helped establish an on-going cross-system collaboration with the Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).

In 1996, multi-disciplinary protocols standardizing the treatment of domestic violence by the legal system, medical personnel, educators, and mental health professionals were released. These protocols were the product of several years of statewide collaborative work by the Governor's Commission, in which the Coalition played a major role. In 1998, under Governor Jeanne Shaheen, the Commission expanded its mission to include sexual violence and produced protocols on sexual violence in line with the domestic violence protocols.

Also in 1996, the Coalition hosted its first annual Enhanced Advocacy Conference to provide advocates with additional training to perform their difficult work, and to help them learn ways to take care of themselves in the face of their stressful jobs.

In 1997 the Coalition, in conjunction with the state, was selected by the Family Violence Prevention Fund to establish a partnership to improve the health care system's response to domestic violence. New Hampshire was one of only ten states in the nation to participate in this program, the National Health Initiative, and the only state in New England. New Hampshire also implemented the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program in 1998 to train registered nurses to provide compassionate and thorough medical services and forensic evidence collection to sexual assault survivors. In 1999, the Coalition was awarded a federal grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services to establish the New Hampshire Domestic Violence Health Initiative which provided training for teams of health care professionals and technical assistance for those teams.

In 1998, the Coalition took a major step forward in ensuring its stability in the years to come by purchasing a building at 4 South State Street in Concord to house its offices. Building owner Stephen Christensen generously donated the equity in the building to the Coalition. Additional support came from the Oleonda Jameson Trust, and through donations from the Coalition's many supporters. The Coalition celebrated an open house in its new home in November of 1999 after extensive renovations, made possible through the generosity of Milestone Construction.

In 1999, the Coalition played a critical role in the revision of the state's domestic violence statutes, 173-B. These revisions greatly strengthened, simplified and clarified New Hampshire's domestic violence statutes.

The Coalition was a key participant in 1999 in a successful application for Grafton County to be funded as a national demonstration site for improving collaborations between domestic violence organizations, courts, and child protective services in families where there is a co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse and neglect. New Hampshire was one of only six sites selected for this project, known as the Greenbook Project, and the only one in the eastern United States.

In 2000, the Coalition was the recipient of WOKQ's Year of Service Award and received more than \$100,000 in free air time on WOKQ and its affiliates. Coalition Executive Director Grace Mattern made monthly appearances on the WOKQ morning show, and the station aired hundreds of PSAs for the Coalition at prime listening time.

The Corporate Citizenship Initiative was launched by Governor Shaheen in 2000 to help businesses recognize the signs of domestic violence and offer meaningful support to employees who are experiencing it. The State of NH adopted a policy on domestic violence in the workplace, and numerous trainings of state employees have been conducted through this initiative.

Also in 2000, the Coalition worked actively for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. Second District Congressman Charlie Bass (R-NH) co-sponsored the legislation and worked for its eventual reauthorization.

In 2001 the Coalition launched a new statewide sexual assault hotline in an attempt to reach out to survivors of this often-unreported crime. A domestic violence hotline was launched the following year. Both hotlines were created with the assistance of CTC Communications.

Work continued during 2002 to 2006 to address the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse and neglect, through the Greenbook Project, and further development of the Domestic Violence Specialist (DVS) Program. The DVS Program is a cross-system collaboration between the Coalition and DCYF, which places crisis center advocates in DCYF District Offices to work with abused mothers, and to consult on child abuse cases that involve domestic violence.

In 2004, work was completed on a comprehensive revision of the Program Standards, and the first monitoring of member programs began using the new Standards in early 2005. Also in 2004, extensive effort was spent on revising the funding formula which allocates funds through the Coalition to member agencies. The new funding formula, which provides base funding to each program, and then divides the remaining funds based on victims assisted and the population and geographic area of each program's catchment area, was first implemented for fiscal year 2005.

In 2005, the Coalition once again successfully advocated for the re-authorization of the Violence Against Women Act, ensuring that critical federal funding programs would continue to support local work. Also in 2005 the Coalition focused effort on improving the collection of victim services data, through development of a comprehensive victim services database manual and training of member agency staff in use of the database.

Today the Coalition is a statewide network of 14 member programs, providing technical assistance and training and administering millions of dollars in state and federal funding contracts. We continue to work collaboratively with many local, state, and federal organizations to further our common goal of ending domestic and sexual violence. Guided by the recognition that violence and oppression are connected, and affect us all, the Coalition

continues to promote social change and work toward the goal of a society free of violence for all