

# How to Find the Facts

## Sources

The following are some tips on how to find the facts about domestic violence in your community:

- ◆ **Police Departments:** Police departments are a source of information for statistics such as the number of 911 emergency calls that involved domestic violence.
- ◆ **Courts:** Information, such as the number of restraining orders and orders of protection issued, can be obtained from the local courts.
- ◆ **District Attorney's Office:** Statistics, such as the number of convictions for domestic violence incidents and sexual assault cases, can be obtained from the district attorney's office.
- ◆ **Public Health Department:** The number of emergency room visits related to domestic violence in your community can be obtained from the city and county public health departments.
- ◆ **Public Library or County Records Department:** In order to obtain census records for your community as a context for incidents of domestic violence, check the public library or county records department for number of residents, age, gender, income, and other demographic data.

## Fact Finding Tips

- ◆ Larger government offices may have independent domestic violence units. If so, go there first. If not, search for Statistics, Research, or Public Information departments.
- ◆ Requests for information should be in writing. Make sure to include contact information for your organization in your letter.
- ◆ You may encounter resistance when making requests for information. Therefore, it is important to be equipped with information about your rights. Similar to the federal Freedom of Information Act, the California Public Records Act (Government Code 6256) requires that government agencies respond to requests for information within 10 days. If you encounter resistance, or foresee that you might, include a reference to the California Public Records Act in your letter.

## The Internet

There is a wealth of information about domestic violence on the Internet. For example, doing a net search with the keywords “domestic violence” will bring up approximately 150 web sites. The Internet is a particularly good source for national statistics. While you probably won't find local facts on the Internet, you will be able to find statistics that are relevant to your state, as well as a multitude of resources such as studies, reports, and information about other domestic violence organizations and training programs. **It is important to realize that not all material on the Internet is valid or reliable.** Here are some useful sites:

- ◆ Family Violence Prevention Fund

<http://www.fvpf.org>.

Violence Against Women Network (an online library of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence) <http://www.vawnet.org>.

- ◆ The Minnesota Higher Education Center Against Violence and Abuse (University of Minnesota)

<http://www.umn.edu/mincava>

Violence Against Women Online Resources (U.S. Department of Justice)

<http://www.vawo.umn.edu/library.asp/>

- ◆ The American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence

<http://www.abanet.org/domviol/home.html>.

SafeNetwork (a collaborative of domestic violence prevention programs in California that provide training and technical assistance) <http://www.safenetwork.net>.

Santa Clara County, California Domestic Violence site <http://www.growing.com>

Keep in mind that many websites have extensive links to other relevant sites. For example, if you visit the Family Violence Prevention Fund's website, you can, with a click of a button, access a great many other sources of information.