

2008

A Snapshot of California's Domestic Violence Programs

Blue Shield of California Foundation Blue Shield Against Violence

Grantee Survey, Focus Group, and Interviews

December 2008

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Introduction

Since 2003, Blue Shield Against Violence (BSAV) has awarded more than \$7 million in core support through its Shelter Initiative to organizations that are central to the domestic violence safety net in California. In 2008, BSAV engaged LaFrance Associates (LFA) to provide a snapshot of the health and functioning of these domestic violence programs. For the purposes of this report, the term “Domestic Violence program” is used to describe organizations that devote a majority of their resources to providing domestic violence services. These are primarily, but not exclusively, shelters.

The results presented here reflect data collected from January to March 2008:

- Five in-depth phone interviews with shelter leaders and field experts,
- Seventy-five responses to an online survey of BSAV grantees (primarily shelters), and
- One focus group with nine executive directors and shelter staff.

The on-line survey received a 76 percent response rate. LFA consulted with program leaders on the context and interpretation of results.

The following pages provide detail on responses to the questions:

- (1) What is the current organizational and service delivery profile of domestic violence programs in California?
- (2) How does receiving core support from Blue Shield of California Foundation affect domestic violence programs?
- (3) How can the field further enhance the capacity of domestic violence programs in California?

Analysis of results highlights three points:

1) **Domestic violence programs provide much, much more than shelter beds.**

Domestic violence service providers address the needs of survivors through the 14 shelter-mandated service areas, as well as other innovative and responsive services including outreach and education, substance abuse and mental health, and policy advocacy.

2) **Domestic violence programs value general operating support, even when grants are small.**

Fifty-nine percent of programs say that receiving the BSAV grant has allowed their organization to leverage additional funding sources.

3) **Domestic violence programs located in urban areas face different challenges from those in rural areas.**

In many ways, the experiences and challenges of programs serving urban and rural regions are similar. But they differ in a few key ways:

- Urban programs tend to be larger and provide services in more languages.
- Urban programs identify different categories of capacity-building needs, such as support in building data management systems.
- Rural programs identify fund development and financial management as most pressing.

Question 1: What is the current organizational and service-delivery profile of domestic violence programs in California?

Size

Domestic violence programs surveyed vary widely in size when measured by the number of staff and clients served.

Exhibit 1

Staffing and Client Capacity			
	Mean	Median	Range
Number of full-time employees (FTEs) in domestic violence programs	13	10	1–54
Number of shelter bed nights provided in FY 2006–07	5,026	3,428	18–25,192
Number of unduplicated, direct-service clients served during the last fiscal year (<i>excluding crisis line calls and outreach programs</i>)	992	467	22–6,753

- **Domestic violence programs employ an average of 13 full-time employees (FTE), serve 992 people annually, and provide 5,026 shelter bed nights per year.**
- Programs in urban areas employ significantly more people (18 FTEs) than rural programs (nine FTEs) ($p < .05$).
- Programs in urban areas serve significantly more clients per year (1,075) than rural programs (494), excluding crisis line calls and outreach programs ($p < .05$).

Service Area

Domestic violence programs surveyed are evenly split between urban and rural locations:

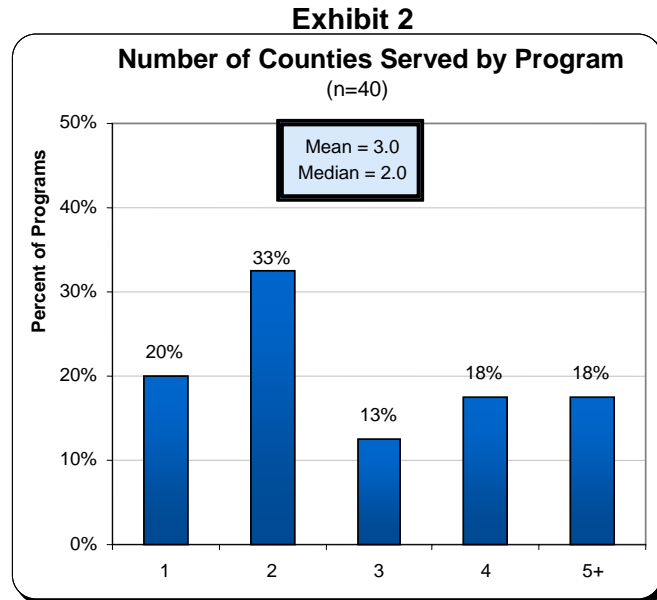
- **Forty percent serve primarily urban areas, while 37 percent serve primarily rural areas.**
- **Twenty-three percent of programs serve both urban and rural regions.**

Urban and rural programs differ in several ways:

- Urban programs more frequently offer specialized services, such as sexual assault services and drug/alcohol abuse programs.
- Urban programs generally offer service in more languages.
- Urban programs are more commonly involved in policy and advocacy.
- Urban programs frequently have greater fundraising capacity and access to resources.

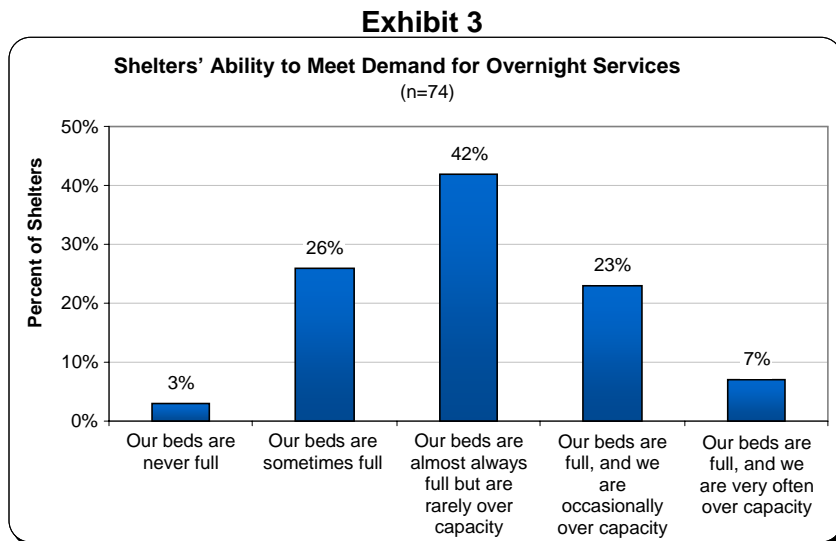
Many domestic violence programs extend services beyond their local communities:

- **More than 80 percent of programs serve survivors from more than one county.**



Physical Characteristics of Domestic Violence Facilities

The demand for emergency, overnight shelter is such that nearly one-third (30 percent) of domestic violence programs are regularly full and often exceed their capacities. Another 42 percent report consistently being at capacity.



Respondents answered the question on a five-point scale where 1 was "Our beds are never full," and 5 was "Our beds are full, and we are very often over capacity."

- **Altogether, 72 percent of shelters are regularly at or exceed their existing capacities.**
- Shelters serving the most clients per year (i.e., more than 1,000) are significantly more likely to report that their beds are always at or over capacity ($p < .1$).
- At least 50 percent of urban shelters and 30 percent of rural shelters indicate that more bed space would enhance their capacity to serve survivors.

In addition, programs have already experienced, and continue to anticipate, a "domino" effect whereby the already-high demand for their services increases when funding cuts force other social services and domestic violence programs in their regions to scale back.

When shelters do not have enough space, they find a variety of solutions for survivors in need of emergency shelter. Some programs provide motel vouchers, while others refer clients to a nearby homeless shelter. Survivors are rarely turned away without safety planning and alternative lodging.

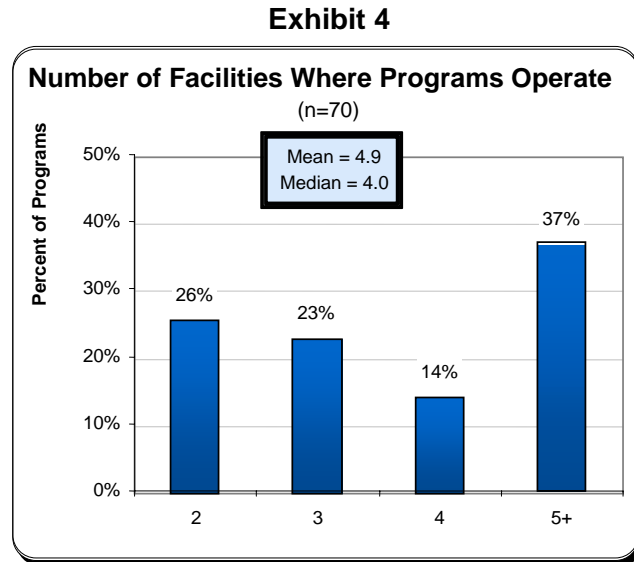
Domestic violence programs offer more than emergency shelter services, often operating out of multiple locations or satellite sites.

- **Ninety-five percent of programs operate out of more than one location.**

Maintaining staff at multiple locations helps programs reach survivors from geographically isolated parts of their counties and from nearby communities.

“If our clients had to drive to the next closest services or facility from almost anywhere in our county, it would be at least an hour. [For] the shelter itself, it would be two hours. That’s why we have the outreach offices.”

– Executive Director



Core Services

The Office of Emergency Management (OES) and the California Department of Public Health’s Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program (MCAH) provide significant funding for domestic violence programs.

In order to qualify for this funding, programs are required to offer services in 14 core areas.

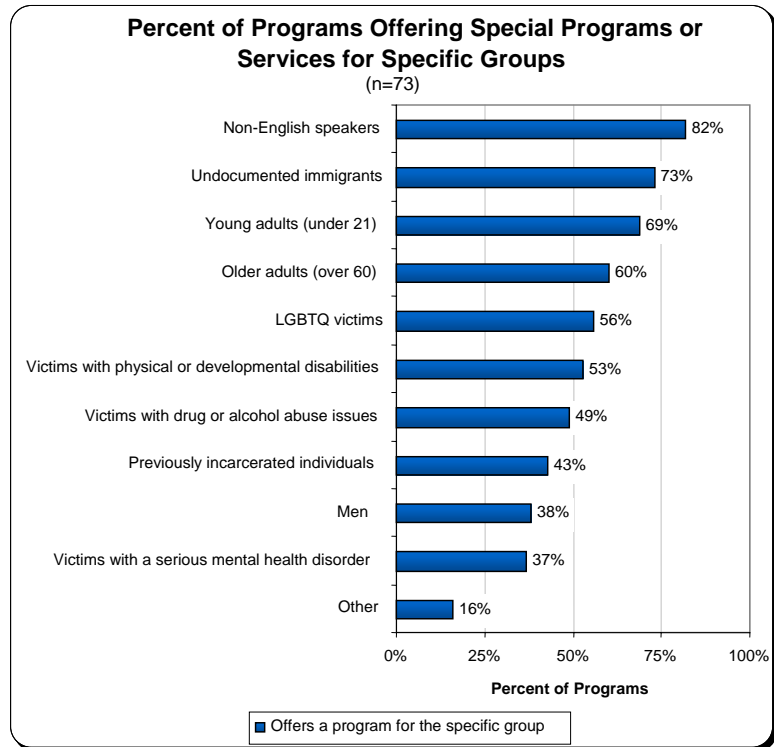
Exhibit 5

- Required Core Services**
1. Twenty-four hour crisis hotline
 2. Counseling (individual and peer group)
 3. Business center (victim assistance from 9:00–5:00 on a walk-in basis)
 4. Emergency safe home or shelter for battered women and their children
 5. Emergency food and clothing
 6. Emergency response to calls from law enforcement
 7. Hospital emergency room protocol and assistance
 8. Emergency transportation
 9. Counseling for children
 10. Court and social services advocacy
 11. Legal assistance with temporary restraining orders and custody disputes
 12. Community resource and referral for clients
 13. Household establishment assistance
 14. Cultural competency

Exhibit 6

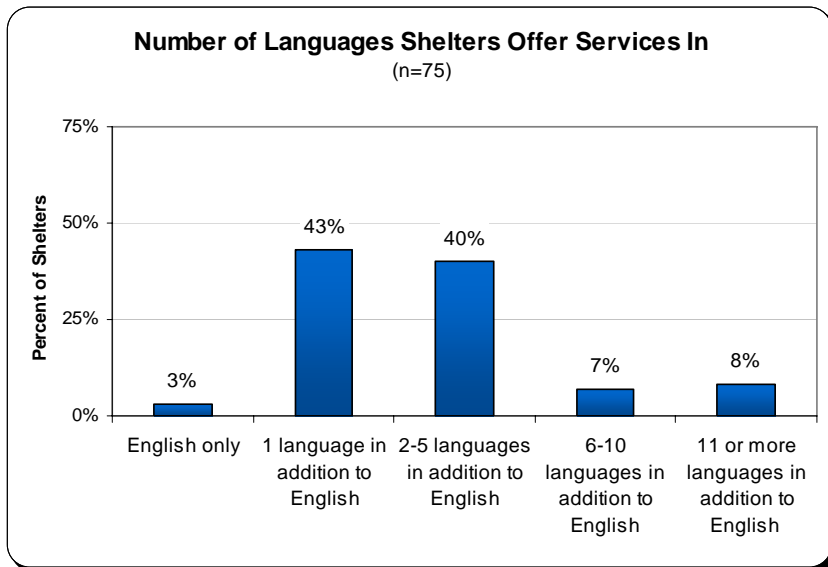
Domestic violence programs take great care to provide these core services to survivors with special needs.

- **The majority of programs provide specific services for non-English speakers (82 percent) and undocumented immigrants (73 percent).**



Programs serve diverse survivors by employing staff and engaging volunteers who speak many different languages.

Exhibit 7



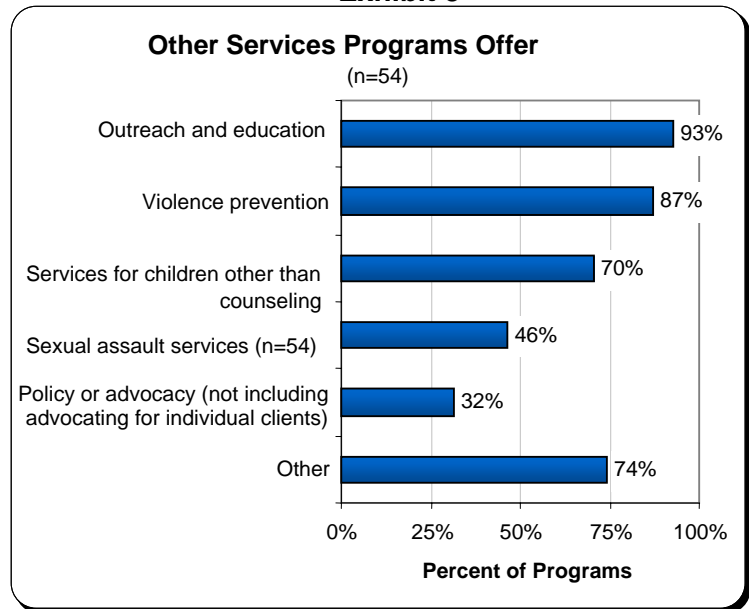
- **More than half of programs (55 percent) offer assistance in at least two languages other than English, and 15 percent offer services in more than six languages.**
- Urban programs are significantly more likely to provide services in at least three languages, as compared to rural ones ($p < .1$).
- The more languages spoken, the more likely a program is to offer special services to undocumented, immigrant survivors.

Beyond Core Services

Each domestic violence program offers a different constellation of programs and services, tailored to the organization’s capacity and the needs of the community.

- **The vast majority of domestic violence programs (72 percent) go beyond the 14 core services to better address the needs that they identify in the community.**
- In particular, shelters offering longer stays (i.e., more than 60 nights) are significantly more likely to offer services beyond the core requirements compared to those offering shorter stays ($p < .1$).

Exhibit 8



Domestic violence programs offer a diverse range of “other” (non-core) services, such as:

- Human trafficking assistance;
- Nutrition education;
- Employment services;
- HIV/AIDS support;
- Financial literacy/money management;
- Child development classes;
- Computer skills; and
- Self-defense workshops.

“We have a large menu of services – from victim services, child abuse prevention, youth services, childcare resource and referral, emergency homeless assistance – the list is lengthy. So, we have the unique ability to blend all of these programs to meet the needs of residents in our community.”

– Executive Director

It is common for domestic violence programs to provide services specifically for survivors of sexual assault: **46 percent of all programs offer sexual assault services.**

“In the new shelter, we built a room specifically for children’s activities, with a reading corner and a playground outside. We provide homework support to older children, have holiday and birthday parties, and have games that are directly related to recovering from violence in the home. Our goal is to break the cycle, because we know that children live what they learn. We can show them a more beneficial way to work through those feelings.”

– Executive Director

Also, many programs serve children who have been witnesses to or victims of family violence.

- **Seventy percent of programs provide services to children other than counseling.**

These services include childcare, academic tutoring, recreational activities, and supervised parent visitation for families involved with Child Protective Services.

Community Outreach and Education

Domestic violence service providers recognize the need to engage in prevention activities, as well as crisis intervention and direct services to survivors.

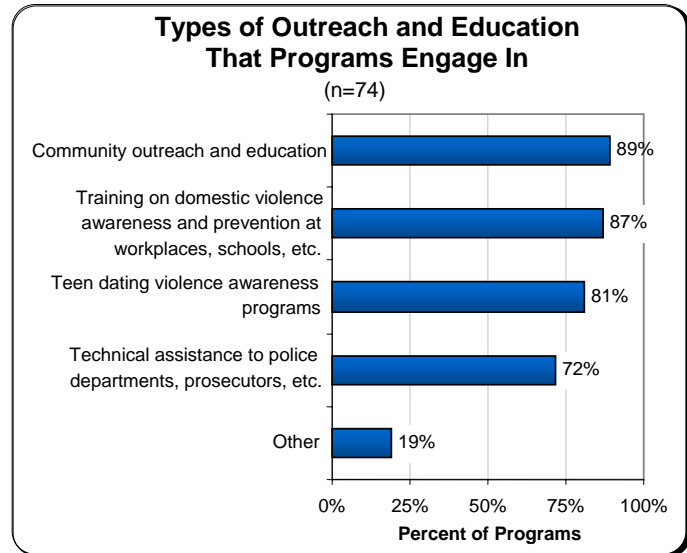
- **Eighty-nine percent of programs conduct community outreach and education.**

"In our prevention programs, we have home-based parent aid programs and a welcome baby program that visits every new-born in our county to make sure that [they are connected to] any services needed.

We do school-based presentations on saving relationships. We do youth programs that are in juvenile hall, anger-management programs, and life-skills programs."

– Executive Director

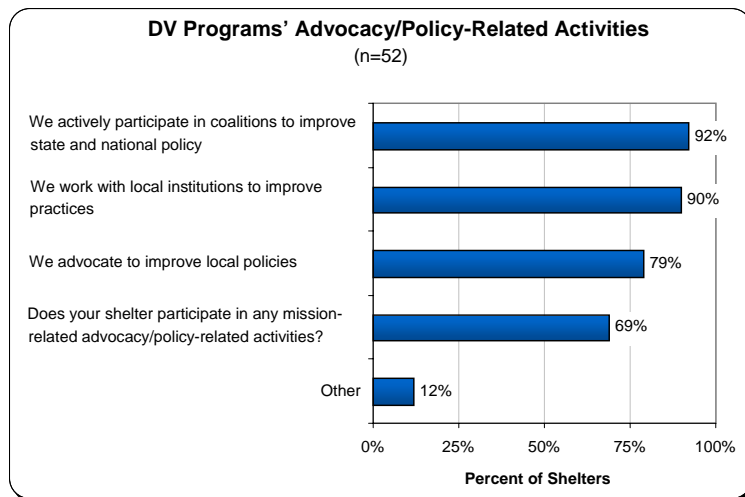
Exhibit 9



Advocacy and Policy-Related Activities

Many domestic violence providers engage in policy-oriented advocacy activities, such as participating in statewide coalitions or working to improve the practices of local criminal justice agencies.

Exhibit 10



- **More than two-thirds (69 percent) of programs report participating in some type of advocacy or policy-related activity.**

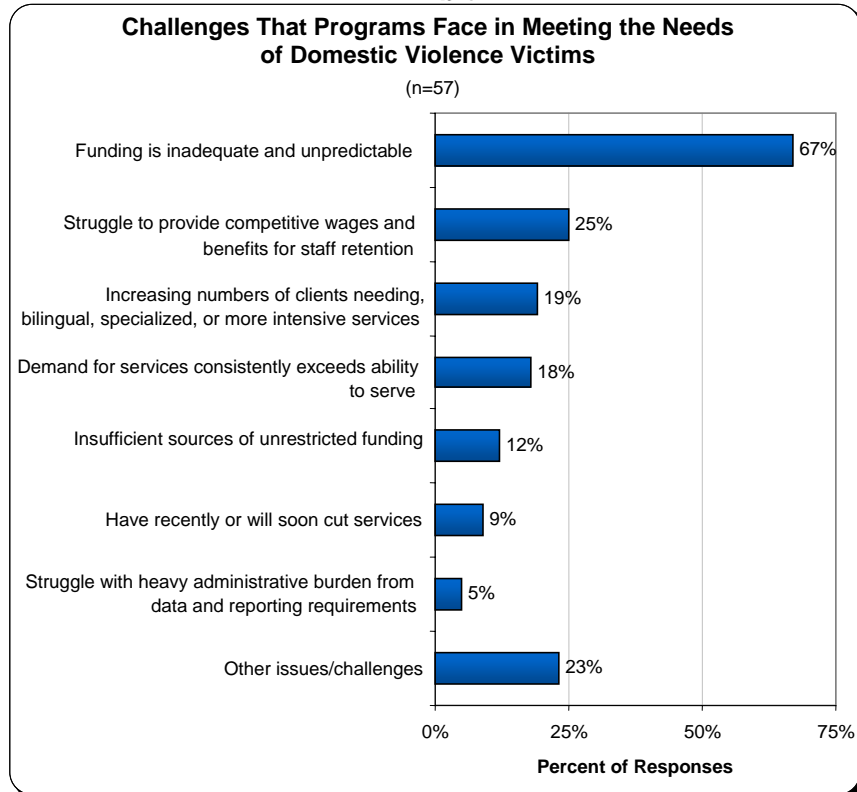
- Large domestic violence programs (i.e., those serving 1,000-plus people per year) are significantly more likely than moderate and smaller-sized programs to engage in policy-related activities.

In addition, 88 percent of these larger programs provide training and technical assistance to criminal legal systems, and 75 percent regularly attend Domestic Violence Death Review Team meetings.

Although domestic violence programs are performing well in an under-resourced landscape, they face two key challenges:

- **Meeting the complex and changing needs of survivors; and**
- **Funding and administrative requirements to operate programs.**

Exhibit 11



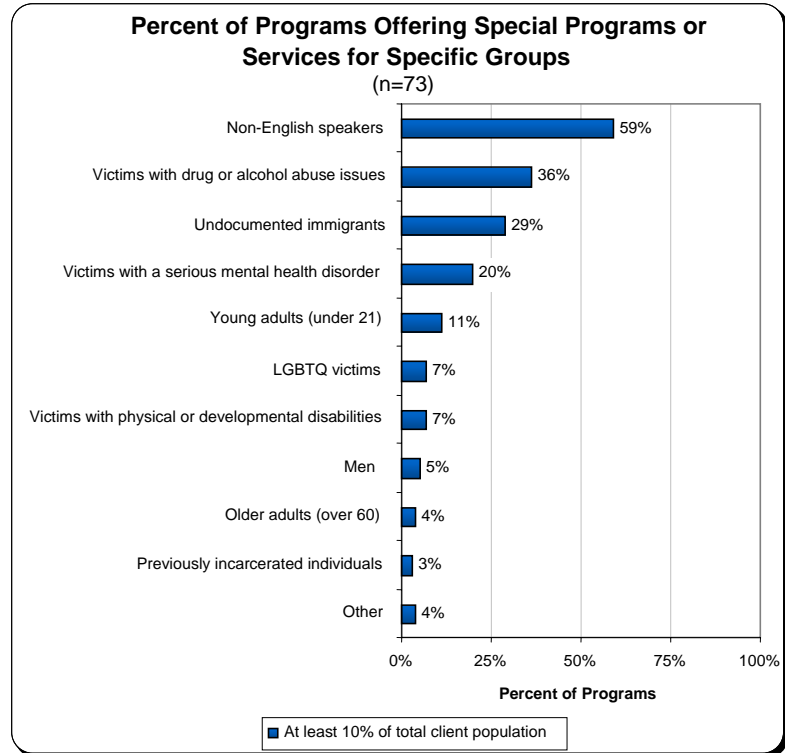
Percents do not add up to 100 because responses from open-ended questions are included in more than one category.

Survivors' Needs

Domestic violence survivors present a myriad of complex needs beyond immediate crisis intervention and safe shelter. As noted elsewhere, programs are expanding their capacities to serve non-English speakers, and many offer programs for undocumented immigrants.

However, it is a challenge for programs across the state to assist survivors with substance abuse issues, mental health problems, self-sufficiency needs, and immigration issues.

Exhibit 12



Substance Abuse

The prevalence of drug and alcohol use among domestic violence survivors is considerable.

Over one-third of programs (36 percent) conservatively estimate that at least 10 percent of their total client population has drug or alcohol abuse issues.

To address this, about one-third (33 percent) of programs offer on-site substance abuse services.

However, even programs that offer on-site drug and alcohol services struggle to address survivors' substance use – oftentimes concurrent with mental health crises – and the challenges that these behaviors cause in communal-living shelter programs.

Mental Health

One-fifth (20 percent) of programs estimate that at least 10 percent of their total client population experiences serious mental health disorders.

Many shelters will not house people with an untreated or severe mental health diagnosis. And there are few, if any, safe, emergency shelter alternatives.

Just over one-fifth (22 percent) of programs offer on-site clinical mental health services.

Programs offering longer shelter stays (i.e., more than 60 nights), and those operating with fiscal surpluses are significantly more likely to offer these mental health services on-site ($p < .05$).

Self-Sufficiency

In nearly every conversation, domestic violence providers mentioned challenges in helping survivors establish self-sufficiency.

Most survivors have limited resources and must overcome financial challenges before they can establish independence from their batterers.

Economic self-sufficiency is particularly difficult for those survivors without marketable job skills and who are residing in high-cost urban areas where affordable housing is scarce.

Immigrant Survivors

As demonstrated in Exhibit 12, **30 percent of programs estimate that undocumented immigrants make up at least 10 percent of their total client population.**

Programs are responding with specific services and increased language capacities.

However, immigrant survivors face additional, complicated barriers to safety and independence. Employment and housing resources are limited, and therefore legal assistance is often a primary need. Given these barriers, immigrant survivors often require longer shelter stays to meet their needs.

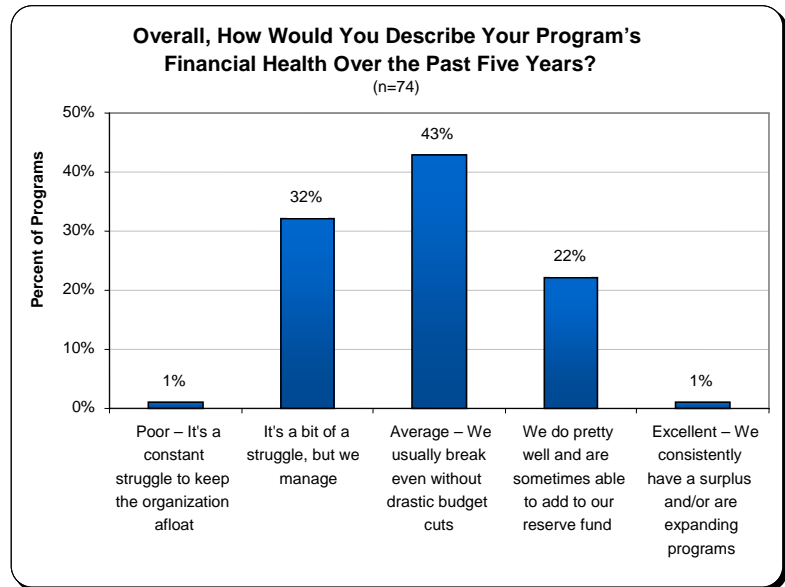
Funding Challenges

Domestic violence programs operate in an environment with limited funding, high demand, changing client needs, and looming state and federal budget cuts. Programs therefore engage in careful budgeting practices, cut costs when necessary, and closely monitor future funding prospects.

When given the opportunity to identify the most pressing challenges facing their organizations, two-thirds (67 percent) of programs commented that funding is inadequate and unpredictable.

- On average, annual budgets are around \$1.4 million, of which about one-third (32 percent) comes from unrestricted revenue.
- Compared to their rural counterparts, urban programs have significantly higher average annual revenues, expenses, and a higher proportion of unrestricted income.

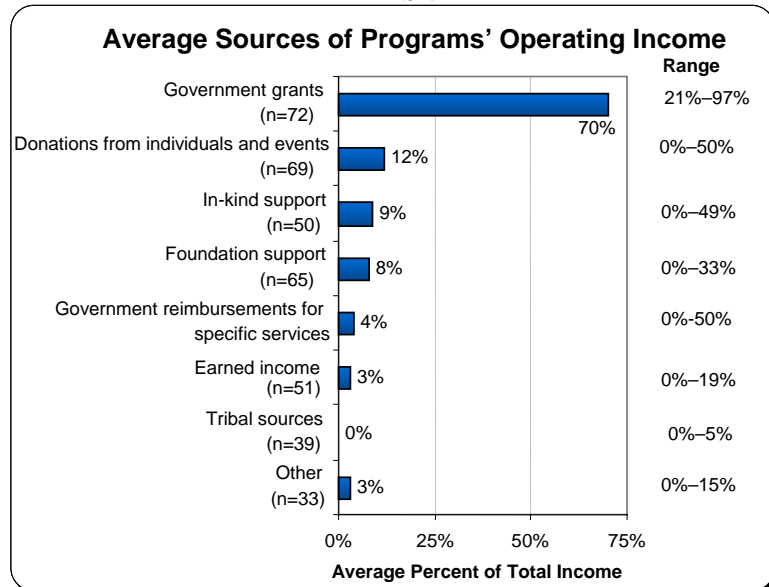
Exhibit 13



Income

- On average, government grants account for 70 percent of total income for domestic violence programs.
- Donations from individuals and events account for 12 percent of total income.
- Foundations contribute eight percent of total income for domestic violence programs.
- Urban programs receive a significantly greater percentage of their annual income from foundations (11 percent) than rural programs (five percent) ($p < .001$).

Exhibit 14



“We are constantly seeking private money so that we can be less dependent on the state grants.”

“We are trying to tighten up here, keeping the utility costs down by running the air conditioning and the heating at different levels. We keep close track of our supplies – if anyone wants an office supply, they have to make a request.

– Executive Directors

Expenses

Programs report just under \$1.5 million for average annual expenses.

Operating Surplus/Deficit

Just over one-quarter (28 percent) of programs report an operating deficit in the previous fiscal year, most notably related to decreased or stagnant grant funding.

Programs with an operating surplus are significantly more likely than those without a surplus to:

- Say more space for beds would enhance their ability to serve survivors;
- Have onsite clinical mental health staff;
- Offer cultural competency professional development opportunities;
- Report that financial management training could enhance their ability to serve survivors; and
- Be satisfied with their data management systems

Programs that operate in urban areas, compared to those in rural regions, are significantly more likely to:

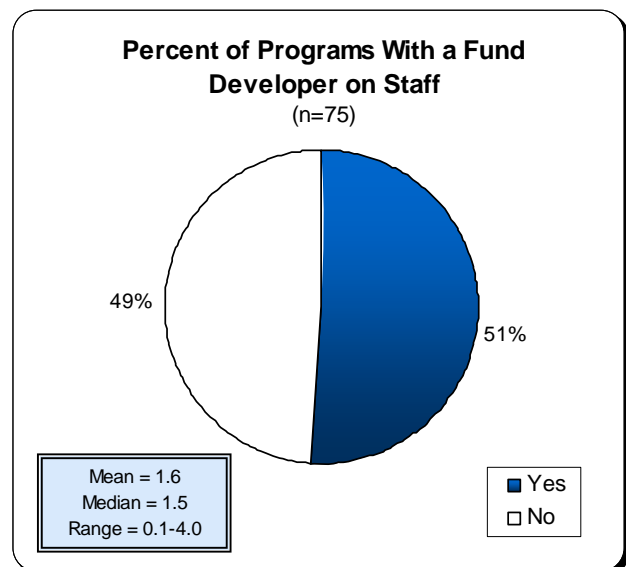
- Receive unrestricted income; including through an earned-income strategy;
- Have at least 60 days of cash on hand; and
- Report that their BSAV grant has allowed them to leverage additional funding sources.

Domestic violence programs have developed strategies for addressing funding challenges, including:

- Diversifying their funding sources;
- Improving data systems;
- Providing professional development;
- Cutting costs; and
- Employing fundraising staff.

A significantly greater percentage of urban (70 percent) than rural programs (32 percent) have a full- or part-time fund developer on staff ($p < .05$).

Exhibit 15



Note: Comparison and analyses of domestic violence programs' fiscal profiles are complicated by varying organizational structures. For example:

- Some programs operate independently, while others are managed by larger, umbrella organizations.
- While some are stand-alone domestic violence programs, many others receive dual funding for domestic violence and sexual assault services.
- State and local funding allocations are influenced by whether a program is the only one serving its county or one of many.

We must therefore use caution when making analyses or generalizations about domestic violence programs' fiscal conditions.

Other Organizational Issues Identified

Technology and Information Management

- **Two-thirds of domestic violence programs (68 percent) report that they either have or are in the process of developing an electronic client management system.**

However, programs' satisfaction with their data management systems varies widely (Exhibit 17).

Exhibit 16

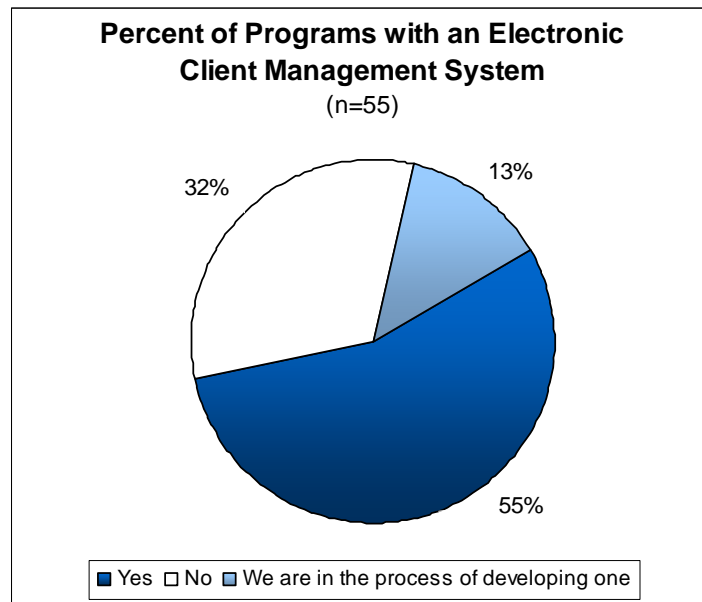


Exhibit 17

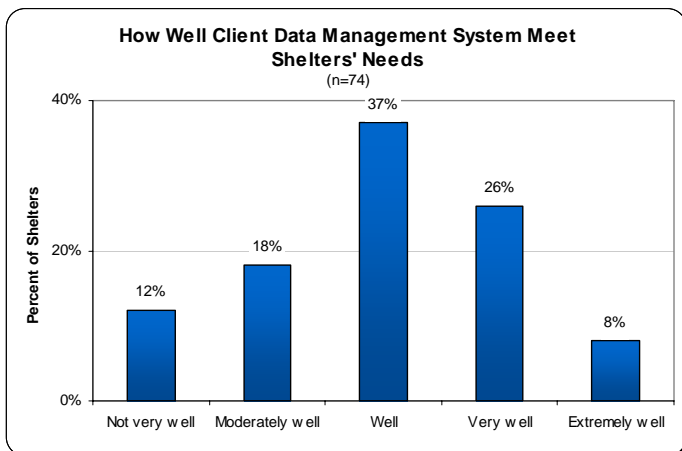
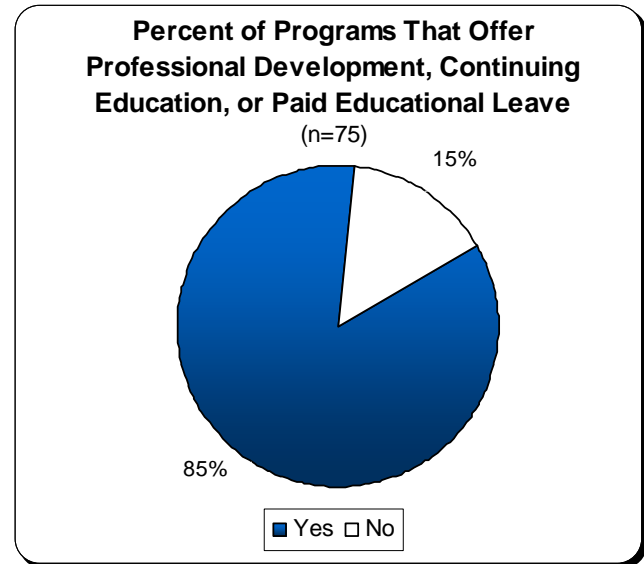


Exhibit 18

Professional Development

Programs were asked about opportunities for staff to participate in employer-sponsored professional development, continuing education, or paid educational leave.

- A significantly greater percentage of urban programs offer professional development ($p < .01$) and financial management training ($p < .05$) opportunities to their staff.



Strategic Planning

- **Almost three-quarters (73 percent) of programs have a strategic plan or are in the process of developing one.**
- Urban programs are significantly more likely than rural programs to have conducted or be in the process of completing a strategic planning process ($p < .05$).

Question 2: How does receiving core support from Blue Shield of California Foundation affect domestic violence programs?

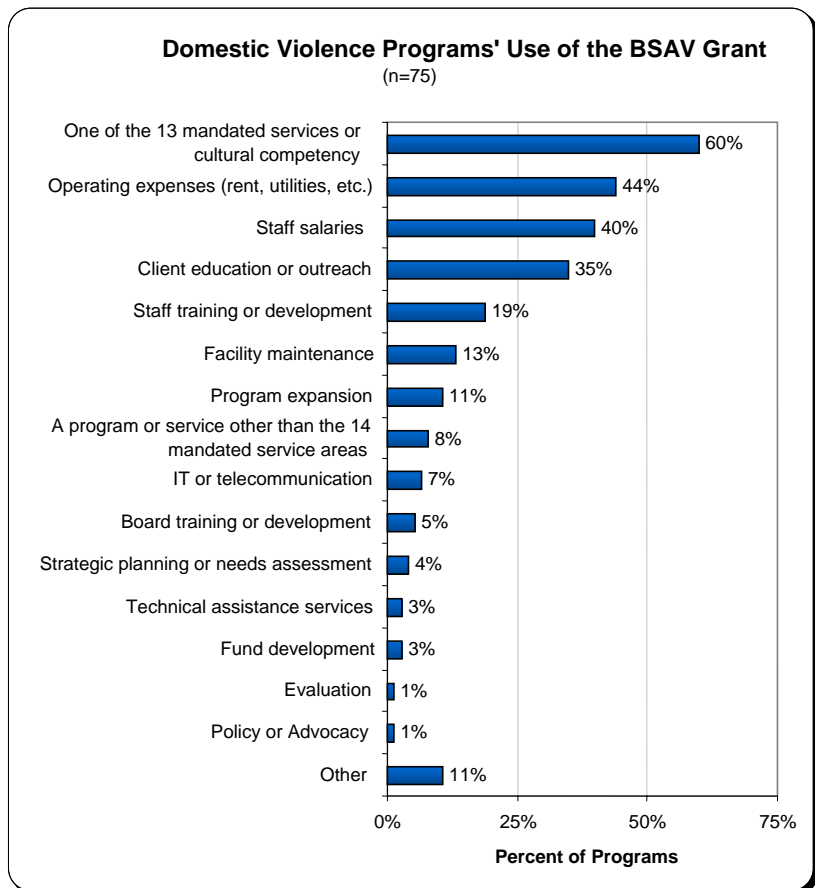
Domestic violence programs report a range of effects due to the BSAV grant for unrestricted operating support. Fifty-nine percent of programs say that receiving the BSAV grant has allowed their organization to leverage additional funding sources.

Programs used their BSAV grants for a wide range of expenses – and rarely for the same purpose two years in a row. Instead, programs use the grant to fill the most pressing needs:

Nearly two-thirds (60 percent) of domestic violence programs used their grant on one of 14 core services, indicating that BSAV support helped provide basic and vitally important domestic violence services.

- Rural programs were significantly more likely to use BSAV grants for facility maintenance (25 percent) and IT or telecommunications (18 percent), compared to urban programs ($p < .05$).

Exhibit 19



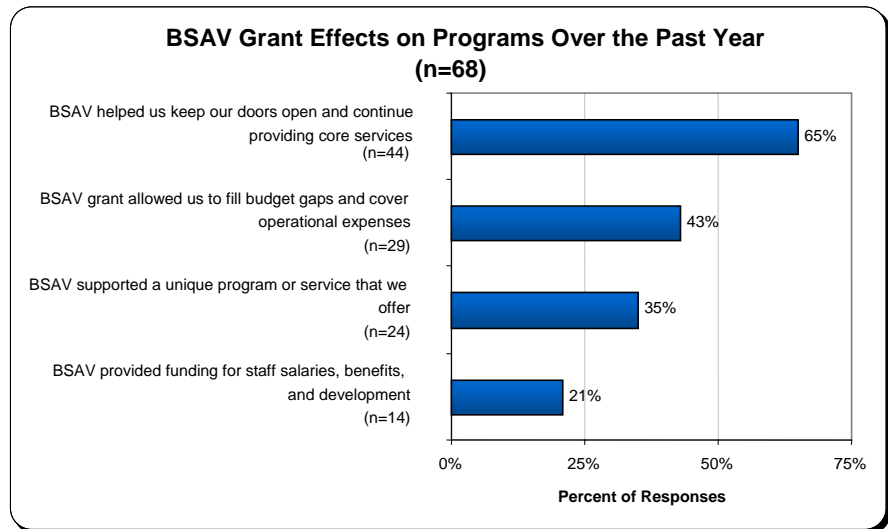
“The Blue Shield Against Violence grant has been significant in that it allows for operating costs. When operating costs are offset by other funding sources, this allows more dollars for direct services, which are vital. [Blue Shield of California Foundation] funds can also be used as matching funds, which is crucial in meeting grant requirements.”

– Executive Director

Many programs expressed their appreciation for the unrestricted funding.

Exhibit 20

- 65 percent of programs report that the BSAV grant has helped them to keep their doors open and continue providing core services.



Question asks: "Please briefly describe the effects of the Blue Shield Against Violence grant on your shelter over the past year." Percents do not add to 100 because some open-ended responses discussed multiple issues and are included in more than one of the above categories.

Question 3: How can the field further enhance the capacity of domestic violence programs in California?

Fund Development Training

Domestic violence programs identified the types of assistance that would help them the most. **Over half say that receiving fund development training (58 percent) would enhance their capacity to serve survivors.**

Considering the reliance upon government grants (Exhibit 14), many programs across the state are concerned about dependence upon government funding, and some are seeking alternate revenue sources. Non-traditional financial strategies that programs are adopting include:

- Fee-based services;
- Planned giving;
- Endowments;
- Technology-facilitated giving; and
- Entrepreneurial activities.

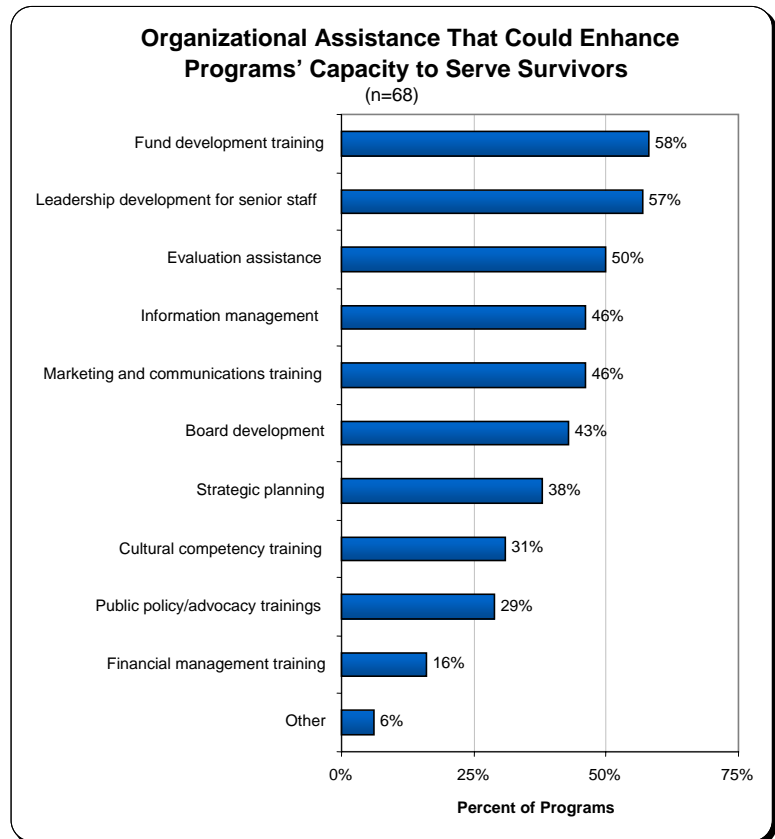
Exhibit 21

Program Evaluation Assistance

Domestic violence programs are increasingly facing outcome evaluation expectations from funders and communities that they serve. Programs know this type of evaluation is complicated by safety and confidentiality concerns, yet they are interested in assessing the impact of their efforts on survivors.

Some organizations are tapping into emerging best practices for domestic violence program evaluation; some are taking advantage of funder-offered training; and many are implementing evaluation activities with very little technical support.

Larger, urban programs are significantly more likely to request evaluation assistance ($p < .05$).



Conclusion

Domestic violence programs in California provide a spectrum of critical services to survivors in crisis. This overview, of those receiving funding through Blue Shield of California Foundation's Blue Shield Against Violence program, reveals a complex landscape, with programs differing greatly in the types of services they offer, their size and structure, and the populations that they serve.

For all of the differences, a common theme emerges in the tenacity that domestic violence programs demonstrate to survive despite a challenging and unpredictable environment, particularly with respect to funding. While funding is difficult to secure – with unrestricted dollars being rare – programs nonetheless appear able to respond to challenges with new and innovative services.

This report seeks to provide a summary understanding of the health and functioning of California's domestic violence programs. Domestic violence programs in California face uncertain fiscal and political environments in the years ahead. Domestic violence leaders are eager for tools that will help them stabilize and advance their organizations. They recognize the realities of our economic and political environments, and understand that these call for a change from "business as usual." The leadership and staff of domestic violence programs are highly dedicated, resilient and – we believe – able to rise to the challenge.

This report identifies several opportunities for domestic violence programs to continue building their organizational capacities. It also provides compelling information for funders – and potential funders of domestic violence services – to invest in these essential organizations with both general operating and capacity building support.

