A Needs Assessment of a Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Clinic’s Target Population in Gainesville, FL

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In its role as a certified domestic violence center, the IPVAC Clinic decided to conduct a needs assessment in underserved areas of Gainesville to determine where domestic violence services are needed in the county and what type of services and community resources are needed by the victims of domestic violence. My task was to conduct the needs assessment for IPVAC Clinic for Mike’s Zone area in Gainesville about trends in domestic violence crimes over the years and services available to the victims in this area. According to recent statistics since 2004, child abuse and domestic violence has been steadily increasing in the Alachua County. A part of Gainesville known as Mike’s Zone has been declared as the largest crime zone in the county.

Crucial components of the needs assessment included: population demographics, rates of poverty, unemployment, the incidence and mortality of various health indicators, domestic violence shelter data. Efficiency was examined by evaluating the number of women who took shelter in the local domestic violence centers and the number of cases reported. The data for the assessment was collected from the local Police Department records. For population data of the county data was collected from Census data provided by Dr Nancy Hardt, Allison Law and Wayne Harvey. This data was compared to the national average data of USA provided by CDC. The health indicator data was compiled from the Florida Department of Health website. The barriers to reporting of domestic violence crimes were assessed such as wait period for subsidized housing for victims, health and safety issues, and lack of response by emergency room in hospitals; community resources like lack of transportation and problems in obtaining TANF.

The results showed that the target population has significant increased rates of domestic violence and child abuse over the years. Mike’s Zone as a whole is one of the poorest communities of Gainesville; the target service area had highest rates of crimes, unemployment, poverty and homicide rates. The glaring differences between the domestic violence crimes and child abuse cases in the service area and national average suggest that the service population is not receiving adequate intervention required to curb the social virus of domestic violence. The suggested action plan included reducing disparities, improving infrastructure, engaging the community in finding solutions and advocating for change in the current situation of domestic violence crimes. Multifaceted approaches are recommended to bring all the stakeholders to the table in order to address this complex issue.

Future needs assessment would certainly help in monitoring the situation. Clinics like IPVAC can definitely help in fill in the gaps in DV data and decrease the problem by spreading more awareness in the community. However it is essential to continue with this project to gain a better understanding of the needs of the community and the current resources which are available. So, clearly a lot of efforts need to be put in to extend the resources for victims in domestic violence situations like housing and mental health services, increased knowledge in the community about services available, bilingual services for the immigrant population, and special attention should be paid to victims with special needs such as disabled, older victims, same sex and their needs should be met.