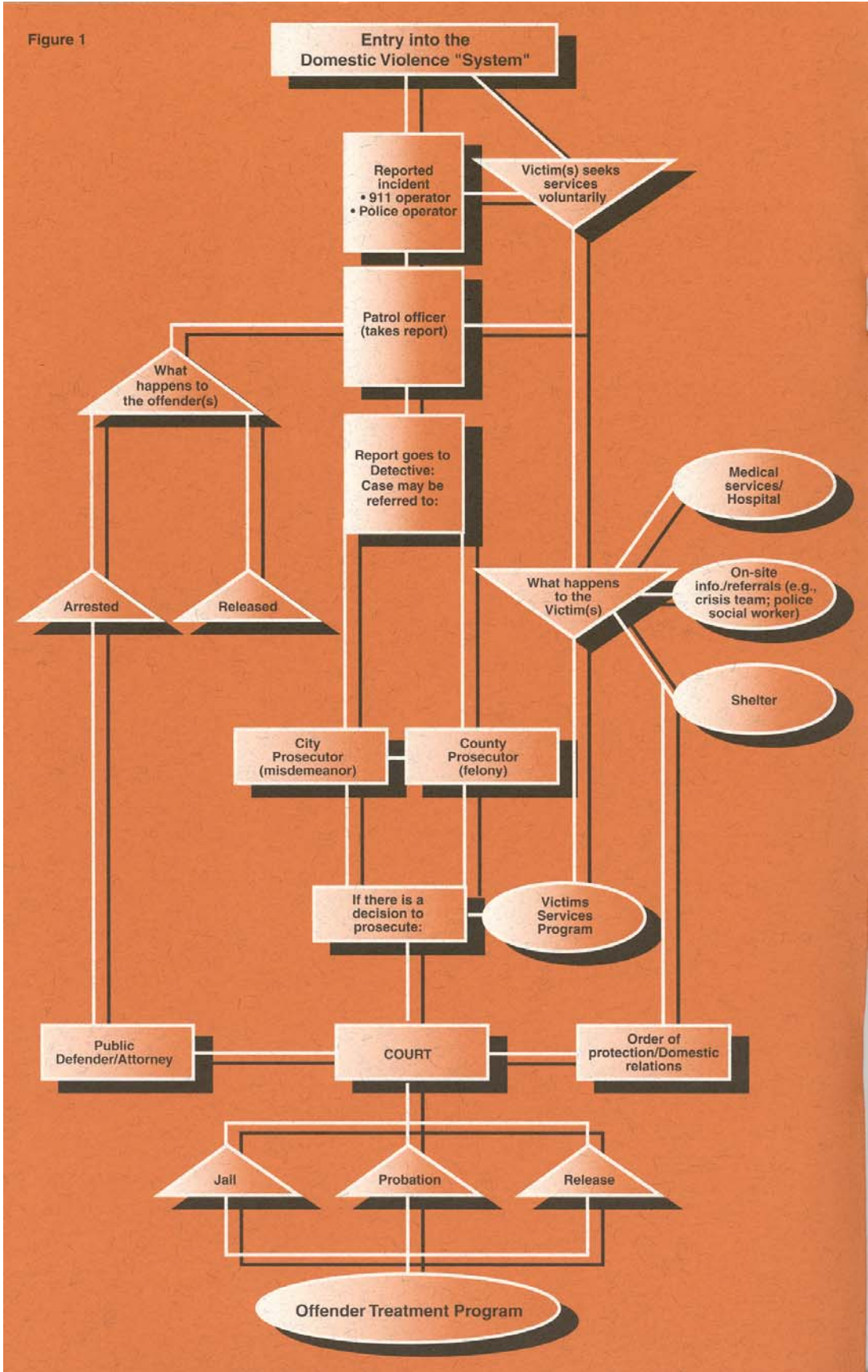


Hitting Home:
Voices of Domestic Violence



Figure 1



In the fall of 1995, the City of Phoenix Police Department convened a special group of people known to be deeply involved with the social and personal aspects of domestic violence. This group, which came to be called the Phoenix Police Department's Joint Task Force on Domestic Violence, consisted of police and criminal justice personnel, social service and health care providers, and a number of interested community members. Task Force members soon began earnest discussions on how best to reduce the incidence of domestic violence—a crime that is, sadly, the number one call for police service in the City of Phoenix.

The goal was ambitious. At times, Task Force meetings suggested the well-known fable involving six blind men and an elephant. One blind man touches the elephant's leg and proclaims an elephant is like a tree trunk. Another touches the elephant's trunk and says an elephant is like a hose. Another touches the elephant's tail and says an elephant is like a rope. And so it goes, each man sensing only a small portion of the elephant with no one able to see the animal as a whole.

The domestic violence problem, like that elephant, stands huge and diverse. The people involved in the domestic violence system, like those blind men, see only a part of its entirety and therefore hold conflicting, yet legitimate, viewpoints on how best to address the problem. Such conflicts, unresolved, can create tension among the very groups whose cooperation is essential for effectively dealing with domestic violence. The aim of the Task Force was to reduce those

conflicts and resolve significant issues.

One surprising barrier hampered initial discussions. The group lacked an overall framework of the system that they could use in defining problems and identifying needs. To surmount this barrier, a “road map” of the entire domestic violence system had to be developed. That road map, pictured in Figure 1, identified four discrete segments of the system:



This publication, *Hitting Home: Voices of Domestic Violence*, visits the four distinct destinations depicted on the system road map. Based on interviews with representatives of each segment, it attempts to give the system a chance to speak for itself. The voices are real, the opinions strong and emotional. And reading these

honest and often brutally frank stories affords an unprecedented glimpse into the depths of the domestic violence crisis.

Not surprisingly, even with such diverse speakers, recurring themes emerge from the voices. Taken as a whole, they tell of generally acknowledged needs as well as broad avenues of agreement among those most intimately involved in the system. As a group, they offer direction to future efforts aimed at combating domestic violence.

Hitting Home was researched and written by staff and consultants of the Morrison Institute for Public Policy, School of Public Affairs, and Arizona State University. This publication was produced for the City of Phoenix Police Department as part of a collaborative proposal to the U.S. Department of Justice for Community Policing to Combat Domestic Violence.

VOICES OF VICTIMS AND AN OFFENDER

What is it like to be a victim? How does an offender justify his actions? This section presents the voices of three victims and one offender. The victims, all women, represent a wide range: affluent and poor, white and minority, those just entering the system and those already through it. Their stories, while unique, also contain elements that are typical of nearly all victims of domestic violence. They clearly bring out a theme of this book—that domestic violence is ultimately a crime of one person exerting undue power and control over another.

The offender's story may or may not be typical of all offenders. Some 50 offenders were asked to share their feelings and opinions for this publication. Only Will agreed to allow his story to be told.

"Teri" Victim

"I was single for 18 years before I met my husband," says Teri, the victim of an abusive spouse. "I was a successful businesswoman. I bought this house with my own money;" She gestures around her professionally decorated home located in a gated, upscale community.

"I was very lucky because I had my own money so I could

get out of our relationship and I could afford to defend myself. Most women can't. One woman I know was left with only \$12 for herself and her child—and she was pregnant. That's usually the case."

Teri has no family or personal history of abuse. "I met my husband while I was recovering from cancer surgery.

He treated me like a queen during the first part of the relationship. He was literally my Prince Charming

who came along to save me after this terrible life-threatening disease."

She eventually moved into his house and they planned a marriage, but the first violence occurred before the wedding.

"We were having a disagreement and he began drinking martinis. He threw a wooden stool at me and hit me in the back. I ran to the other end of his house to try to get out, and he caught me and hit me with such force that my shoulder knocked a doorknob right off the door." She escaped and moved in with a friend.

"I knew better than to go back," Teri says. But she met with his psychiatrist who claimed the violent behavior was a fluke. She also extracted

a promise from her fiancé to quit drinking hard liquor. The ensuing reconciliation went smoothly and they decided to go ahead with their wedding. Afterward, however, several more incidents of physical abuse occurred and Teri left again, this time obtaining an order of protection. She eventually bought a new home and moved in.

In the months that followed, her husband tried to get back together with her. He offered to go through a rehabilitation program, which he claimed to pass "with flying colors." So she sought the counsel of a minister who advised her to try to reconcile. She started seeing her husband again. It didn't work, and she broke off the relationship. Then she learned she had another, possibly cancerous, tumor.

"We decided to make one final attempt at reconciliation," she says.

They met and an argument occurred. "I went home and he called wanting to come over. I said 'no' because he'd told me he'd been drinking. But about ten minutes later he's at my door."

She let him in and a violent argument ensued. "At this point I get scared. I go to the

kitchen and he backhands me, flipping me around into the refrigerator. The phone is just a few feet away, so I dial 911, but he grabs the phone away. Now the phone is on the floor and I'm on the floor with him on top of me, and he's banging my head against the tile and strangling me, putting on more and more pressure. That goes on for what seems like ten minutes. He then grabs me off the floor and forces me to the bedroom. I try to reach the house alarm, but he overpowers me. None of my self-defense moves have any impact on him he doesn't feel the pain. He throws me on top of the bed and at this point he's smothering me with the comforter. Things start to go black and I know I'm dying."

Suddenly help arrives. "The door bell rings. It's the police. The phone in the kitchen is still connected and 911 has heard the whole thing. So the police are yelling and knocking which startles him enough that I get away, gasping for breath, and run out the door. Seeing three policemen doesn't stop him, though. He's still after me and it feels like I'm screaming, but barely a whisper comes out of my throat. Two of the policemen try to restrain him, but he goes wild and it takes all three. They take him away to jail and I go to the hospital."

Teri believes the police saved her life more than once. "They're my heroes. When I was in a crisis, they showed up just like that," she snaps her fingers, "and they always took him off to jail. But they were the only heroes," she says. "The rest of them [referring to other people in the system] are insensitive. They don't understand domestic violence."

Entering the court system for the first time, Teri faced a startling revelation. **"The battered woman goes from a husband who gives her orders to a prosecutor who gives her orders.** She's not allowed to speak for herself. I was told this was the state's case, not my case I was just the victim. How do you think that felt?"

For Teri, it felt demeaning. "They treat us like we're children, like we're crazy, but we're not. I've found that the women in my support group are highly intelligent, and a lot have done their own legal work to find out their rights. We're just very fragmented from all the stress and the violence we've been through. It's like coming back from a war. "

She is not happy with other parts of the justice system

either. "The attorneys are horrible, and I mean both public and private. They just don't understand the profiles of domestic violence on either side." And judges are no better, she says. "They are heartless. Very cold."

Her criticism extends to divorce court. "We had a meeting one day in the judge's chambers where the judge was told about my cancer history and the domestic violence. And the judge looks over at me and says, 'Well, she looks fine to me.' So if we don't present ourselves in a wheelchair or bloodied or bludgeoned, they don't believe we've been through any of this."

Teri was particularly outraged by the disposition of her domestic violence case. "My husband was charged with five felonies for his actions against me and one felony for assaulting an officer. The five felonies that he committed against me were swept under the rug, and he took a plea bargain to the felony assault against the officer. I kept asking the prosecutor, 'Why does it have to be this way?' And he said, 'Because that's the only thing he'll plead to.' And I thought, 'Wait a minute! All the way through this whole thing and the criminal is still in charge?' And when it came down to the end, and it didn't go to trial, I broke down and just

cried really hard. He spends 17 days in jail for what he did to the officer and nothing for what he did to me? No restitution?"

Teri thinks the system should change. She wants to see a legal defense fund established for women. "Every time these guys get brought in on domestic violence and are found guilty, they should at least pay \$1000 or \$2000, or whatever they can afford. That money can go to the women to get some support. Almost none of them have an attorney, and if they do, they aren't good attorneys because they can't afford them and the guys can."

Teri would also like to see better protection for the victims of domestic violence. **"These guys get out of jail on their own recognizance and the women hide behind their doors, shaking, wondering, 'When's he going to come again?'"** You don't sleep for months because you're afraid."

And Teri doesn't feel that the system has done anything to stop abusers like her husband. "He goes through a counseling program, but he still glares at me through the court and does everything he can to

draw out the divorce and try to break me. And he's going on to live his life as usual. He's dating someone else and she moved in with him three months after he tried to kill me. She's aware of the situation, but is still living with him. And she won't get hurt until he marries her."

Meanwhile, Teri still feels angry and shattered. "There's no joy in my life. The only thing that makes me feel like waking up in the morning is that I know there are other women I can help. I will continue to talk about this. I will make a difference."

"Rosa" Victim

"I was raised in a family where my dad was very controlling," says Rosa, the survivor of an abusive marriage. "Whatever he said, that's what he wanted. He was still slapping me and hitting me with a belt when I was in college."

Rosa was born and raised in Mexico City. She went to college, earned a degree in hotel management, and worked in a large resort hotel in Mexico for two years before she met and married an American citizen. They moved to his home in New York.

"In my husband's family it was the same thing. His dad

would get drunk and hurt his mom, and my husband excused it by saying, 'Well, I think my mother deserved it because she has a big mouth.' So it kind of goes from generation to generation."

After the birth of their son, Rosa and her husband moved to Phoenix. "At first, it was hard because we didn't know anybody and we didn't have any jobs. The money situation became a big issue and we started having a lot of problems. It escalated from him calling me names and giving me a little push to where he started slapping me and kicking me."

As an immigrant, Rosa was confused about her rights and she was unaware of the services available to her. Her husband used this lack of knowledge to control her. "His weapon was, 'Don't you ever leave me because you're not going to make it. I'll take your son away from you. And if you ever do call the police I'll kill you.' So I felt like I had no way out."

Rosa endured several incidents of violence before a final blowup on Mothers' Day. "He called me names and slapped me, and I guess I'd just had it, because I called the police and they took him away. I was really happy because I thought that the police would only

help you if you had blood all over you and were ready to be taken to the hospital, but I only had marks on my face, arms, and neck. Still, I was really upset. I was crying. I was nervous. I was you name it. And when the police came they helped me out. They calmed me down. They talked to him. They took him and they did what I think they were supposed to do."

The police advised Rosa to leave home as a safety precaution. "I was lucky to get a bed in a shelter that day. A teacher I was working with at Head Start, and I had just started the job maybe two months before that, was the one who helped me get into the shelter. She went with me even though it was Mothers' Day and she has five kids. That meant a lot to me."

At the shelter, and at the transitional housing facilities that followed, Rosa discovered a whole new world of services. "They had a lot of resources available for me. They were able to tell me, 'You can go to that place or that place to get this kind of help.' They were able to offer support. A lot of people helped me, especially my case manager and the play therapist my son saw. They gave me a

home for a period of time, and if it hadn't been for them, I would have had to stay with my husband."

At the same time, Rosa started attending support groups. **"It helped a lot to know that I wasn't the only one with this problem.** All of us in the group knew how it felt, how frustrating it is. It helped me to know that somebody else in the same situation was able to make it and that I was going to make it too. It's been a long process, already three years, but I got divorced, went back to school, got my teaching certificate, and I saved enough money to match a down payment on a house."

Rosa sees other women in the same situation she was in. "There are a lot of immigrants here, and the women who don't have paperwork really depend upon their husbands for their income or for communicating with other people. It is like a chain that keeps them attached to their husbands."

Support is the most important thing to give a victim, she says. "A woman needs to be shown the services that are available to her. She needs to be told that she's not alone, that it's not her fault, that there have

been other people like her in the same situation, and that they have succeeded without a husband."

Using her ex-husband's family and her own background as an example, Rosa points to the need for early education regarding domestic violence. "We need to start teaching children that they don't have the right to hurt other people. We have to stop this 'boys need to be tough and girls need to be quiet' thing. When we give those messages to our kids we are encouraging them to grow up and become abuser husbands and silent wives. If we don't stop it now, then I guess it's not going to stop."

Rosa speaks highly of the services she received, but she doesn't think anything was accomplished by the court-ordered counseling for her ex-husband. "I was at a support group led by a male. He approached me and said, 'Your last name sounds familiar to me. Who's your husband?' I told him and he said, 'Oh. I was his instructor in this training. I think it was a waste of time because I could see that whatever I was saying, it was like it didn't make sense in his head.'"

She finds other flaws in the system as well. "Sometimes the counselors working with the women need to be

stronger. The women are sitting around watching TV, not trying to go to school, not trying to get some kind of training. The counselors need to tell them, 'You're not going to get anywhere if you're still drinking, if you don't attend parenting classes, if you don't go to the self-esteem group. That is what you have to do.'"

Workers in the system also need to listen to the victims, says Rosa. "See how they feel. Learn about their experiences what happened, what helped them, what didn't help. **Churches don't help when they tell you, 'You're married and it has to be for life. You have to stay with him no matter what.'**"

But outsiders are often afraid to help abused women. "I've found that people sometimes know about a domestic violence situation and don't want to offer help to the woman and her children. They feel like they might be getting into something that's none of their business yet they will go and help someone in a car accident! I think they need to help women and children, too."

She feels that in one incident with her ex-husband, a police officer and a

prosecutor were not sympathetic or helpful either. "When this happened, they were saying, 'But you don't have any witnesses.' And I said, 'How do you want me to have witnesses? This just happened at my house. If I knew it was going to happen, I would have called somebody. You know, "Hey, come on, witness how he's going to abuse me.'"

"And one of the officers said, 'What do you want?' I said, 'You know what I want? If I have to spend two dollars to buy Tylenol for the pain that he caused me, then I want him to pay me back those two dollars. If I can't go to work the next day because of the pain, then I want him to pay for that.' And nothing happened to him. I'm still really upset about it."

If Rosa were in charge of improving the domestic violence system she would try to get others to understand how it feels to be a victim. "I would take the police officer to a shelter and leave him there. I would try to make him feel the fear that a woman feels when a strong man, a big guy, is hurting you. Maybe that would make him see how it feels to be powerless, knowing you cannot fight it out because you are not going to leave if you do." She pauses to catch her

breath. "When you are desperate looking for somebody to help you, and when that person turns you down, that is the worst. That is the worst."

"Martha" Victim

"I met Paul in a video store," says Martha, a young victim of domestic violence. "He was so nice, always giving me flowers and chocolates and everything. We went out for three months and then we started living together. I fell very much in love. The only thing I didn't like when we were dating was that he always used guns."

Martha left her family to move to California with Paul. At the age of 15 she became pregnant by him. Soon she noticed the first signs of trouble. "It was Christmas and he was out drinking with his friends. I went looking for him because it was late. When I found him, he stared at me weird and pulled me in front of all the men and said, 'You want to be here? Then you're going to stay right here.' And he made me stay there for two hours while they kept on drinking. I got tired and cold and scared. I start to cry. But the next day he was nice and said he was sorry, so I thought everything was okay."

The drinking continued, however. "During the week when he was working, he was okay," Martha says. "But on the weekends he would get drunk and I was afraid of him. And he was jealous all the time. He got angry if I wore nice clothes or makeup. I was not allowed to look at another man because he said that was flirting. He even told me not to look out the window. If I went outside just to see the sun he would get mad at me even if I laughed he got mad. And he started accusing me of sleeping with other men."

Paul began locking Martha up at night while he stayed out late drinking. She dreaded his return. **"I couldn't go to sleep because he could come in at any time.** If I was sleeping, he would sneak into the bedroom and pull back the sheets scaring me. Then he would use his flashlight to search every inch of my body to see if I had been with another man. He would even check my lips to see if was wearing lipstick. If my lips were too dry, he'd accuse me of kissing another man. And he would abuse me. It was awful. But I didn't know any better. I thought it was normal."

Finally, Martha decided to leave. "I was eight months pregnant and he came home late one night. He always locked the door when he went out, but when he returned he said it was open, so he started yelling and telling me it was my fault. By that time I was thinking everything was my fault. Then he pulled out his gun and shot at me on the bed. The bullet missed and went through the pillow instead."

The next day, Martha's godmother visited unannounced. "I didn't tell her about the shooting and all the fighting. I just told her we were having some problems. She said 'Leave him,' and I didn't think twice. I just grabbed my clothes and went with her, and I slept well for the next month."

After the birth of the baby, Paul showed up at the hospital. "He bought a crib and all kinds of baby stuff," says Martha. "Then, after two weeks, he asked me to live with him again. It seemed okay because my godmother had financial problems, and he had a job. So I went back."

At first, the relationship was better. "He got us a nice apartment and bought new furniture for me, and I thought, 'Things have changed. It's going to be okay.' Months passed with

no more jealousy and no more fights. Then he started getting drunk again. And then he started checking me over with the flashlight again."

After almost a year, they had another blowup. "He took me to a dance, and like always when we went out, he never let me look at anyone. I could only dance when he wanted to. Then he started drinking wine, and I got nervous he was always real crazy when he was drinking wine. I became so frightened I started shaking, and then, as we got ready to leave, Paul whispered to me, 'Who is he?' And I didn't know who he meant. All I could see was someone's feet, I was so afraid to look up. Paul walked out to the car without a word."

At home, he continued drinking and taking drugs with two friends, says Martha. "Then he started asking again, 'Who is he? Who's the guy? Just tell me who he is, his address, his name. Don't worry. I'm not going to do anything to you.' When I couldn't tell him, he pulled out his gun and began hitting me with it. I screamed to the guys in the living room to help, but they didn't do anything. He hit me so bad I wanted to throw myself out the window because I thought it was all over for me. Then he went out to drink some

more, locking me in. When he came back, he put the gun to my throat and **I heard him counting to ten as if he was going to shoot me."**

Martha left Paul three more times during the next four years. During part of this time, he was arrested on drug charges and sent to prison. Upon his release, they got back together and Martha became pregnant again.

"I loved him," Martha says.

"He used to cry over the phone, 'Please don't leave me. I'll change.' But when he got back, he screwed shut the windows and locked the door so I couldn't get out."

Finally Paul embarked on a trip, leaving Martha locked in the house with no food or money. He returned four days later, red-faced and bloated as if he had been drinking for several days. "He stormed in, turned up the music real loud and told me he wanted to have a little talk," says Martha. "Our five-year-old son ran in and asked, 'Dad, are you fighting or playing?' and Paul told him, 'Were just playing.' Then he picked up

the one-year-old baby, shut the door to the bedroom, and he pulled out his gun and cocked it. He didn't say anything to me except, 'Okay Martha, that's it.' By that time I knew he'd figured out I had called the shelter and was going to leave him."

Paul tossed the baby roughly on the bed. He then threw Martha against the wall and began beating her with the loaded gun. "He was hitting me all over especially on my legs," she recalls. "And then he just shot me in the arm and started laughing. 'Do you want another one?' he asked. I was bleeding very badly and Paul suddenly seemed startled or afraid. He told me to call 911 and he ran out. A few minutes later I couldn't feel my hands because I had lost so much blood. That was one month ago and he's still at large. But he will come back."

Since her release from the hospital two weeks ago, Martha has not moved into a shelter. She has been receiving services from the Victim Advocate program and other sources, and has gotten both counseling and financial assistance. After her experience, however, she says she realizes she has positive choices to make.

"Getting shot made me think more," Martha says. "I

want to get my GED. I want to be somebody. I want to be a good mother. I want to encourage my kids to be good boys, not like their father. And I want to stop the violence.

"Will"

Domestic Violence Offender

"Before I got arrested, domestic violence in my eyes was some woman beaten, battered, and bloodied. It was only in the extreme that I pictured domestic violence as a problem. Now that I've been through the system, I know that domestic violence can be anywhere from just pushing, shoving, or touching, to verbal abuse. The law is pretty defined. But there are a lot of people in the system who shouldn't be there. And I am one of them."

Will is a middle-aged, white, self-employed dry wall contractor who is currently pursuing a second career in telemarketing. He was arrested on a misdemeanor charge of domestic violence after a series of bitter fights with his wife. After the arrest, Will was required by the court to attend a 12-week domestic violence education course. He speaks of "his incident" and shares his views before and after mandatory counseling.

"When my wife and I were first dating, we did a lot of partying. We did some drugs-I wasn't really into it. Then after we got married, I didn't want to do any drugs or heavy drinking, but she is basically an alcoholic. Her drinking has caused lots of violence. Prior to my incident, we had four weekends in a row where the police ended up at the house. I had black eyes. There was scratching, pushing, swearing and broken things in the house. Every time the police came out they would say, 'Why don't you just leave and let her calm down. Obviously she is irate.'"

Will convinced his wife that her drinking was a problem, and she stopped for a brief time. "Then something blew up one morning. It led her into heavy drinking all day long, which resulted in having the police over in the afternoon." The argument sprang up again that evening, and again the police came. "They said, 'Why don't you go to a hotel? She is crazy right now. Call us in the morning.'"

"Well, I knew that she was getting into drugs pretty heavily. I came back that night about ten or ten-thirty and she was locked in the bathroom. I knew she was up to something, so I opened the door with my

key, but the latch was on. So I took the door, real easy, and pushed it opened. Parts of the molding broke off it. But I caught her with the pipe in her hand and she was totally drunk.

"She called the police. I told them, 'Come on. I'd like you to catch her smoking crack.' They came out and yelled at me for coming back after they had told me not to. I said, 'I know. But she is in here doing something and she needs to get caught or she is going to kill herself. Something has to happen.' They said, 'Go back to the hotel and call us in the morning.'"

"The next morning, I was there at the house. The police were there. I had my business there, my telephones. I had no money. I needed to get my stuff. She had been up all night long and was still high, still drunk. We could not get it resolved between us. So the police called in their supervisor. He had no idea about any of the prior incidents. He just walked in, saw the broken door, and said, 'You are getting arrested.'"

Will feels that his arrest was unfair. "It was wrong. Even the two officers there could not believe I was

being taken away taken away because the law says that if something is broken or bloody, you're going. They took me in and handcuffed me. I lost work that day. I had no money to get myself out. I had no idea what was going to happen to me. I spent 11 hours in the system and didn't even see a judge, so I walked away thinking that everything was fine."

After his release, Will and his wife continued to have problems. An order of protection was issued. In the meantime, they sought private counseling and decided to give their relationship another try though they had to live together "illegally" because the order of protection was still in effect. Then, Will says, four or five weeks after the initial arrest he found out that he faced a charge of domestic violence criminal.

"I didn't even know that I had a court date. The only reason I found out was because I was living with my wife. They sent the paperwork to her to the place I was not supposed to be. The courts need to find out where to send this stuff. It could be a problem."

Will decided to speak with someone in the prosecuting

attorney's office. "We got into it because her attitude was, 'Tough shit. We take these cases seriously.' I said, 'What cases? You don't even know what happened.' So, I was given a choice: take the class or go to a jury trial. A jury trial for snapping a molding off a door to prove a point? To me, it was ludicrous. I took the class not to waste anybody's time."

Will feels his initial screening for the class was very good. "She brought some things to light. Kind of in my face, she said, 'You are here because you put up with what went on for four weekends. You should have walked.' It was an eye-opener for me."

But his initial experience with the class wasn't as positive. "Eighty-five percent of those guys in the class look really scuzzy. I was angry. I did not want to be there. And there definitely are some bad counselors within the system."

Then his attitude changed. "Has the program helped me? Yes. Tremendously. It is incredible. As you get into it, you realize that you are really no different than anybody else. They have problems just like you have problems."

Will talks about what he learned. "We have a thing in class about ownership taking responsibility. The counselor works the group really well, getting people to see things to take ownership. He'll say things like, 'If you did it, talk about it. Raise your hand. We want to hear what you have to say. If you don't want to admit what you did, don't tell us lies.'"

"I saw a guy go through almost 11 classes and never say a thing until the last day he opened up talked about what he got out of the class. Almost everyone goes through that. On the last day, they say, 'I thought I would hate it at first but I learned a lot.' The class works for the most part."

"I know I learned a lot. I learned it was wrong to break down the door. I am guilty of that. I learned the definition of what is or could be an arrest for me. It is a lot less than people think it is. People need to be aware of what domestic violence is. And that includes police officers. I know people who have come to the door with obvious bruises and blood, and officers walk away."

Will concedes that domestic violence classes don't fix all the problems. "My wife and I are still working through some issues, like with the drinking, but we have not had violence. Without the

classes, it would turn into violence again."

He admits he hasn't resolved all of his own difficulties either. "I have some control issues. That's a lot of what it comes down to in domestic violence. One person says, 'You aren't going to do this,' and the other one says, 'Yes I am and you're not going to stop me.' Then the first one steps in with 'If you do it, I am going to hit you.' What the class has done for me is to help me understand the type of things I can do to prevent violence. I can't say I will walk away from her 100 percent of the time, but there are a lot of situations now that I can say, 'Screw it. It's just not worth it.'"

In spite of the lessons he has learned, Will remains openly critical. **"The system is not working to its advantage. The system took me in, and she should have been there instead. I get the domestic violent classes, I have to pay \$200, and she gets nothing.** She should have gone through the program because it would have helped her. It was only through private counseling that she was able to work through some of our issues."

He is still bitter about the arrest, too. "If I had been the supervising officer the day I was arrested, I would have taken us both out of that house. We both should be going to class, but the system only makes me go."

Will believes that classes should be required soon after the arrest. "The system can't come a year later and charge a guy with domestic violence. You can't expect him to get anything out of the class. He is not going to care. With some of them it is like, 'She had it coming,' and if the same situation came up again, they would still kick her butt. In my case, I took the class within a month of my arrest. That is when it needs to happen."

Will thinks one of the solutions to domestic violence is education. "We need a lot more classes within the church and school on what a healthy relationship is and how to communicate. And when you are getting married, you should get some classes on domestic violence: How you solve it, how you deal with it."

Will still disagrees with the legal definition of domestic violence. "Domestic violence should be when you get to physical abuse. I don't believe verbal abuse belongs in the same system. There is

a line there somewhere that should be drawn."



VOICES OF SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

How do front line social service providers deal with victims, offenders, and the personal trauma associated with violence? This section presents the voices of four such workers — a victim's advocate attached to the police department, a psychiatrist/medical service director, a women's shelter worker, and a counselor for offenders. Their stories are widely different, but they reveal strong common themes: not all offenders are the same, treatment for victims and offenders needs to be improved and expanded, and everyone affected by the crime of domestic violence must be considered — especially children.

"Peg"

Counselor/Victims Advocate

"You're surviving day by day," says Peg, a counselor for victims of domestic violence. "Your whole life is one crisis after another. If it's not, 'How am I going to pay this bill?' then it's, 'How am I going to cover up this black eye?' or 'How am I going to put food on the table tonight?' or 'Is he going to come home in a bad mood?' Domestic violence is about simple daily survival."

A mental health professional by training, Peg currently works as a Victim's Advocate for the Phoenix Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit. The victim's advocate role is new for the unit. "I don't think many cities have this type of program," she says. "In fact, we may become a model for other police departments."

Prior to joining the Police Department, Peg was a crisis team member for a private, nonprofit health agency. Speaking of her new job, she says, "My role as a victim's counselor is much like working on the crisis team, but now I am

also a victim's advocate. As such, detectives come to me with cases where there is a problem involving victims. For example, they might have a victim who is irate and angry at the detective because there isn't enough evidence to prosecute her case, or the detective may want to refer a victim who needs counseling and education, information or services, or other types of interventions."

Peg believes the detectives of the domestic violence unit are very supportive. "I was fearful at first that they wouldn't be open. Well they are, and they are coming to me with more and more referrals."

Peg's referrals take many forms. Mostly, she sees violence between husbands and wives or between boyfriends and girlfriends. According to Peg, however, domestic violence is much broader than its strict legal definition.

"Domestic violence encompasses anyone in the family, or any loved one," she says. "It doesn't have to be blood relative. It could be anyone you live

with—not necessarily a significant other.

It can involve a mother and child, or a father and child. It can even involve children abusing adults.

I recently had a case where an elderly couple a husband and wife were assaulted by a relative in their home. He cut both of their throats. That's domestic violence. The husband remains in a coma and the wife is going to be okay. Physically she's fine, but she has to move on with her life. My job is to help provide the counseling and support that is needed."

Peg's broad view of domestic violence is based on her many counseling experiences. "There is no norm when it comes to domestic violence," she says. "I work with people from all socioeconomic levels and all walks of life. We also have cases where the man is the victim, but of course, most of the victims are women."

While her present workload mostly involves cases of physical abuse, a big percentage of her past workload involved emotional abuse. "Any victim will tell you that the physical abuse is scary, embarrassing, and humiliating, but the worst part is the emotional,

mental, and verbal abuse. That's where it all really starts.

"And that's what I see when I look at my own past. I was once a victim of domestic violence. I can see from my own history that I was emotionally abused more than once, but didn't identify it. It's weird. When you're out of a situation and you're living a healthy life, you can go back and actually see things differently especially when you've been educated.

A key point, and this is very important, is that there may be a 'victim' even when there isn't physical abuse. I try to educate my colleagues and victims about this."

Peg says that victims should watch for emotional abuse to be replaced by physical abuse as they start to become more independent. Because domestic violence is about power and control, she explains, a perpetrator may resort to physical violence in an effort to regain the control he feels he is losing. And yet while many abusers may become more physical as the situation progresses, Peg notes that control can take many forms. "I know

abusers who are attorneys and use their legal knowledge as a means of control. Others use the children. Some may even call a woman's place of work and tell her boss that she smokes pot. Others use money to control the situation. For example, I am working with a woman right now from an affluent neighborhood. She lives in a \$250,000 home but she called me because she has no food. Her husband is controlling her by cutting off the money, knowing she can't get financial help from the system because, technically, she is too well off to qualify for food stamps. She has started the divorce proceedings and obtained an order of protection, but in the meantime she has to eat. I have literally had to tell women how to pawn their jewelry to get food and rent money."

One of Peg's biggest frustrations has to do with orders of protection and how they are handled and enforced or not enforced. "The victim, on my advice, got an order of protection. The guy showed up at her door, so she called the police. The police came over, but the guy had disappeared. And the police didn't go out and find him because they didn't have the time.

Wait a minute! She's done everything she needs to do, but he's gone. There's no witness. Who can prove he was at her door?"

Peg is not the only one frustrated with orders of protection. She says the detectives are, too. The problem is there are so many violations and they are so difficult to prosecute because, in her words, "the evidence just isn't there."

Shrugging her shoulders, she says, "I don't know what the solution is, but I instruct my victims and clients to always carry a copy of their order of protection on them at all times, so at least they have that. I would also like to see the officers on the street have more education and training on orders of protection. There have been times where an officer has said, 'Hey lady, he just wants to see his son. I can't interfere with custodial stuff.' Well, that's not true. An order of protection means that he is not to be at that address for any reason."

Peg says that police would also benefit from more education explaining why women don't leave abusive relationships. "I think officers need to understand that these women are care

givers and nurturers. The perpetrators are people they love and care about. And there may be financial or other reasons for staying. Certain cultures, like the Latino culture or many Middle Eastern cultures, have attitudes and practices that make it very difficult for women to leave."

The victims also need education regarding the police, says Peg. "The woman gets the courage to call 911 during a domestic dispute, and when an officer goes out, the abuser knows how to handle the officer and she doesn't. He is very nice and cordial Mr. Wonderful; she's the nut, the fruitcake. 'Look what she did,' he says. 'She scratched my neck!' I've just seen too many cases where the victim gets irate and defensive and argumentative with the officer, so what I try to do is educate the victim that this is not the way to treat an officer who is there to help. She has to calm down and answer the questions."

Peg sympathizes with police officers when it comes to frustration with victims. "There are times when I'm burned out, too. If there is a woman who has refused to leave her abuser, and then keeps coming back with the same old story, I get sick of it. I'm sure the officer who goes back for the repeat calls gets just as tired of it as I do.

I think the laws are getting better, though. If there is sufficient evidence, the officer can write up the report and it can go forward for prosecution even without the woman's support. That is excellent. In fact, some of my clients are the angry women whom detectives refer to me for education and intervention."

Peg's work as a victim's advocate sometimes involves acting as a liaison between victims and the judicial system. "I've called prosecutors on behalf of victims who have received a letter saying their case is turned down," says Peg. "But what I do is try to encourage my victims to call for themselves. Often they just don't understand what's going on. They see themselves as being revictimized, only now the prosecutor is the perpetrator. So they're not able to communicate because they're defensive, angry, not listening, not hearing."

Peg sees the prosecutors as being cordial and very reasonable, but she notes that they are juggling heavy caseloads and are focused on making sure they have the evidence needed to successfully prosecute. "I intervene when I can," Peg says. "For example, in one case that was turned down, I said to the victim 'Did you

talk to the prosecutor and tell her that your eight-year-old saw what happened?' In this case, she finally did call and the detective went back out and interviewed the child."

While Peg sees a need for more women's shelters and transitional housing, her bottom line goal is to try to educate victims to help themselves.

"You cannot help them until they are ready," she observes. "But there are some really good detectives who can read between the lines to see when a woman is ready for a change."

Peg believes that everyone needs training on the cycle of violence. "Family and friends need to stand up and not tolerate domestic violence in those around them. In my case they told me, 'I love you, but I will not support you or loan you money until you're ready to get some help until you're willing to get out of this situation.' These people, it turns out, were my real friends."

"Mira"
Medical Director/Psychiatrist

"One of the biggest problems we see are people men and women hiding

their whole abuse situation," says Mira, medical director for a social agency specializing in treating victims of domestic violence. "They need to realize they are in a bad situation, but it is difficult for them because they want the world to see them as good people. So they think, 'I'm strong. I can take it.' But depression sets in, so instead of being strong, they become withdrawn."

Mira has vast experience dealing with the medical and psychological issues of domestic violence. She first practiced medicine as an obstetrician-gynecological specialist and family practitioner in her home country of India. "Being a gynecologist, I have seen pregnant women beaten so severely that they lose their babies," she says.

She moved to the United States 22 years ago and decided to go into psychiatry. She has been in her current position for 16 years, and has recently co-developed a program on domestic violence. "I am doing groups for victims, and seminars for people who work with them," she explains. As a psychiatrist, I provide insight into a different aspect of domestic violence. In addition, I am part of a much broader system of other specialists such as sociologists,

psychologists, and behaviorists who are on staff and available to support victims."

The team approach is critical, says Mira, given the many factors involved in domestic violence situations: jealousy, lack of interpersonal communication skills, the inability to resolve conflict, and a significant change in a family such as a new baby, a relative moving in or out, or a death in the family. Drugs and alcohol also play a major role in many domestic violence situations.

"When you are taking drugs or drinking, you have no inhibitions," says Mira. "You do not control your emotions. You do not control your thinking." A myriad of other social, economic, and cultural factors can also tip the scales toward violence. And children often play a role in the dynamics of domestic violence.

"Ironically, children may be seen as competition by offenders," Mira says. She describes a recent counseling session with an offender. "The man came in because he was jealous of his four-year-old son. In his view, his son was old enough to be on his own. He saw his son as a man who could take care of himself! He was angry because, in his view, his wife

should have been taking care of him. This is not unusual. Many offenders think that their children get too much attention."

Mira explains, too, that medical factors play a larger role in domestic violence situations than some might realize. "One-third of the victims of domestic violence have a psychiatric illness that has been kept under the rug. One in five patients I see has a bipolar disorder that needs to be treated with medication in order to function on a daily basis. Others may have medical problems such as an early stroke that may affect behavior. Everything from brain tumors to chronic insomnia can have an impact."

Mira defines domestic violence as any kind of aggression that occurs at home.

"It can be physical, sexual, or psychological," she says. Mira also emphasizes that domestic violence can occur in any profession, any age, and any socioeconomic status. Regardless of the situation, Mira says, "the victim mentality is always the same. The victim feels that, somehow, she is to blame for what happens to her. This is especially true where a woman can't take control. Controlling a man

who is an abuser, who has all the buttons to push, is not easy," she says. "He can be extremely nice and loving and caring, giving her all the money she needs, but at the same time he can control every moment of her life. So he becomes like a guard. And when one spouse becomes a guard, the family unit doesn't function well."

While men are sometimes the victims of domestic violence, it is women with whom Mira works most often. Women, she believes, are generally more vulnerable because they are usually not as strong physically, and they have been socialized to be the family caretakers.

Counseling is one of the many tools Mira uses to try to help victims. For example, she coached one woman who was dealing with her husband's jealousy by telling her: "You don't need to be a doormat. If you consider yourself a doormat, everybody stomps on you. You need to have pride in yourself. You're a good mom and you take care of your son. That doesn't mean you're a bad wife. He is giving you that label and you are taking it to heart."

She stresses that women have to stand up for themselves. "I tell

them that they need to have some power. I remind them that they are human beings. They have to learn to say 'No! You can't do that to me!'

Most of Mira's patients come to her through the legal system. Often they are initially reluctant because, in their view, they are not "crazy." Why should they see a psychiatrist? In Mira's experience, however, many of these patients benefit from medication.

"When you are depressed and your brain is not functioning normally," she says, "it's impossible to make headway, to understand the cycle of violence, to build self-esteem. Medication can do wonders. When you're happier and sleeping well, you can concentrate more and be more receptive to treatment."

Mira works with social workers, the police, crisis teams, and, occasionally, the courts. She also receives medical referrals for victims of domestic violence. She says she is pleased to see more medical doctors becoming "savvy" about domestic violence because working together in the system is important.

"When I look at the domestic violence system as

a whole, I see two significant ways to improve our effectiveness," she says.

"First, everybody needs to respect the other fields and educate each other on what we can do in our various arenas. The different groups also need to meet each other and have regular meetings to improve the way we work together. For example, patrol officers have a particularly important role to play. I think they need to know what domestic violence is, and then work directly with victim's advocates who can teach them to be effective with victims. Just handcuffing and taking away the offender is not the right way. **Officers have to talk to both the victim and the offender and be able to communicate with both parties before they take action.**

"Second is education for the victims and perpetrators. We must help them see that their situation is not just a quirk. It is part of a pattern, something that probably started with an argument and has escalated over time into serious domestic violence."

Mira believes that children in today's society are particularly vulnerable to violence. "I think children

should be taught in school about what is right and wrong. They need to know they don't have to be a doormat. They need to learn how to solve problems without violence. They need to learn how to have healthy relationships in which no one is beaten down. Young girls in particular need to know that the housewife role is no longer an exclusive role for women. I see women who have been in an abusive relationship since they were young women, and now they have six kids. They have been living in the dark ages for the past ten years without growing or learning any skills to enable them to succeed on their own."

To effectively reach children, Mira says, we must start early. "I recently read that between 1991 and 1996, teenage violence increased by 20 percent," he says. "We need education at an early stage, at age three to five, not at 16 or 17. By then it's too late. They just don't care."

"Karen"

Women's Shelter Worker

"The phrase 'domestic dispute' infuriates me," says Karen, a counselor for victims of domestic violence. "You see it in the paper, you see it in reports: 'So-and-so was shot during a domestic dispute.' **Let me tell**

you, a woman with a gun pointed at her head is not in some dispute. Arguing about who should be president is a dispute, but getting shot is violence."

Karen has worked with victims of domestic violence for more than 15 years, primarily at a Phoenix women's shelter. Most shelters provide a safe place for women and their children. Many also offer other services such as case management, residential counseling, outpatient counseling, job placement, school intervention programs, and housing assistance.

"I wanted to work with women because I have been there and have been through the healing process," says Karen who, herself, was battered as a young wife. "I thought my experience would give me some good insight. I mean, no two people feel things the same way, but I know what it's like to burn my fingers, so I can empathize with somebody else's pain."

Karen says her reward is watching women grow. "They have no confidence when they arrive. I love it when they realize they have

positive choices, that they can get their GEDs, their first real jobs, their first real homes. We have an empowerment model here, so we don't tell them what to do; we simply explain their choices and the likely consequences of each. Sometimes they choose to return to a bad situation, and all we can say is 'If you go back, you may die.'"

The job can be emotionally draining. "It is incredibly hard to sit all day and listen to people talk about the horrific violence that has been perpetrated on them or their children.

It is wrenching to listen to kids talk about hiding in the closet while daddy beat up mommy. It is terrible to see them walk back into a potentially deadly relationship. I've gotten to the point where, if I see a woman with a broken leg, I automatically think, 'I wonder who did that to her?' instead of, 'Gee, I wonder if she fell on the ski slopes?'"

One problem, says Karen, is that domestic violence has not been taken seriously enough. "People need to know that women are dying from this. Here at the shelter, we have plaques on the wall for all the women we've worked with who have

died." She shakes her head sadly. "I've known far too many of them," she says, "far too many."

But domestic violence is not just about physical abuse. "One of the biggest misconceptions is that people think you have to be beaten to come to the shelter. That's not true. Domestic violence is actually about control. It is a belief that says 'I have the right to control you. I have the right to dictate what you wear, who you talk to, where you go, how many minutes you can be gone to get a pack of cigarettes. Domestic violence can be in the morning he says he wants fried chicken for dinner, but in the evening he throws the chicken against the wall and says, 'Where the hell is the spaghetti?' Domestic violence is when she doesn't know what is coming at her when."

At the shelter, Karen sees domestic violence in all its forms. "We may have a woman come in with a broken neck and a 'halo' brace screwed into her skull because her boyfriend threw her down a flight of stairs. Or we may have an elderly woman come in who's been married for 40 years and never been beaten, but she's been so completely dominated that she doesn't even know what she likes anymore. I mean, she can't

tell you if she prefers vanilla or chocolate because her husband has always told her to eat strawberry."

Karen thinks the shelters work pretty well for the most part. The problem is money. "There just isn't enough space. We're full a lot. It is incredibly frustrating to work a shift and have seven different women with children call in, and you have to tell them to try again tomorrow, maybe there will be space. If it is a life threatening situation if a woman calls and says, 'He's drunk and going out for cigarettes. I need to be out of here before he gets back or he may kill me' we tell them to come in, we'll do something. But otherwise we give them a hot line number to call and see if anyone else has beds that day.

Not enough money is available for other services either, says Karen. "We don't have transportation. We can't call a cab and say, 'Go pick this woman up and get her here.' We have to tell the woman, 'Find a way.' If she flags down a city bus and says she's been accepted at a shelter, then the driver is supposed to call a supervisor and let her ride free to safety. But in the middle of the night and on weekends it can be tough to get a bus.

"I would also love it if we had the money to set up a place with phone and fax lines so cops could come in and get to know us, have a cup of coffee, write their reports. Then they would have a chance to meet the victims, get greater visibility in this area. "

Support for shelters seems to be growing, says Karen. "One of the best support systems for us is 911. It is awesome. We call and the police show up. That's great. The 911 operators are incredible. And some of the cops are terrific. But we still need education at all levels: police, hospitals, schools, courts, the offenders, and even the victims. We need to educate people on how to deal with domestic violence situations.

"For instance, most cops hate domestic violence calls, and I can't blame them. It's a job I wouldn't want to do. But when they walk into a home they need to be ready so they don't fall into the male bonding trap of the abuser saying, 'Hey aren't you in charge of your home well I am here, too.' And it would help if they knew what was happening from a victim's point of view, too. She may be bleeding, but she'll grab the cop by the arm and say, 'No, no, don't take him away,' because if she doesn't defend him, he'll come after her when he gets

out. On the other hand, she may go off like a rocket, hiding behind the officer so she can safely call her husband all those names she's stored up through the years. Then she gets labeled as a hysterical female, which is like the batterer saying, 'Well, you see how she is. What can I do?'"

Hospital staff also need domestic violence training, says Karen. "Some hospitals have wonderful education for their staff, but others need to work on it. Staff need to remember not to question a woman in front of her abuser because she'll say, 'I tripped,' or, 'I fell,' rather than, 'He hit me.' They need to get the victim alone. Have her tell what happened in private. And if they don't believe it, ask again. Say, 'I don't know if you would get this kind of cut from that kind of injury.' It is important that women have a correct medical report when they go to court.

Karen feels the courts are improving in regard to recognizing domestic violence. "They are better at issuing orders of protection and providing security at court appearances. But one problem occurs when a woman goes to court to protect her children to get sole custody or supervised visits. She may have had threats of violence against

herself or the kids, but the judge doesn't take her word for it. That really puts the kids at risk. We need to educate judges better about the dynamics of domestic violence.

Victims need more education about how the legal system works, she says. "A lot of victims have no access to any kind of legal advice. Their questions aren't just, 'If he's arrested, is he going to get out?' but also, 'How do I divorce him?' and, 'What about the custody stuff where do I go for help?' Also, victims don't understand the role of public defenders. They think, 'He doesn't care what my husband did to me.' They don't realize that it's the defense attorney's job to speak up for the offender. And they don't understand the prosecutor's jargon either. 'What is a felony? What is a misdemeanor? Why is this a class two felony?'

"We need more money for intervention with kids too," says Karen. "If not, we'll never solve this problem. Here at the shelter, we are seeing second and third generations of battered women. We are seeing adults who were here as kids. It's a little sad to realize there's not enough early intervention. If we can

work with kids in the schools, we can teach them how to resolve a conflict without anybody getting hurt. We can teach them that violence is not okay, hurting people is not okay."

In contrast to her work with victims, Karen has also counseled offenders, leading group sessions in conjunction with a male therapist. "It worked well. They got both a guy's perspective and a woman's perspective in the sessions. I thought that was ideal." To her surprise, she enjoyed working with offenders. "It was a real challenge. It gave me a look at both sides. And I connected with the men even though they would sit around and say, 'Men are supposed to be in charge of women and everybody knows that,' **I respected the fact that they had the guts to come into therapy. I guess I discovered they weren't all knuckle-draggers.**"

But what happens to offenders is one of the weakest links in the domestic violence system, says Karen. "Sometimes a guy will get arrested for beating up his wife, and two hours later he's banging on her door, ready to rock and roll all over again. Prosecution is luck of the

draw. So there may be no consequence to his actions. One of the things I found out working with batterers is that until you tell them violence is not okay, they won't stop. I mean, we can give them eight weeks of "shake and bake" anger management, but that doesn't change underlying attitudes and motives. That takes at least a year. That takes money. But it is a very important process, and it can work. I've helped guys who have spent a weekend in jail and then voluntarily walked into therapy and said, 'I will never go through that experience again. You need to teach me what I need to know so this doesn't happen.' I know it can work.

"And when the perpetrators are ready for services, they don't need to be put on a waiting list," Karen says. "They don't need to call and get, 'Hi, I understand you finally want to stop being abusive to your wife and children. We'll have an opening for you in about three weeks.' They need it then. Don't put them off, because it is so important to treat the offender. We can work with a woman and get her to change her choice about going back to a perpetrator, but what does that mean? He'll probably go out and find himself another victim. We need to change that. Something's got to happen at a very

fundamental level in this society that says violence in not okay."

"Tod"

Domestic Violence Offender Counselor

"If you count on the police alone to solve the domestic violence problem," says Tod, a counselor for domestic violence offenders. "you won't be very successful. And if you count on the court system alone, or the judges or the counselors alone, you won't be successful either. To create the most effective intervention, we need to all work together police, clergy, counselors, judges, teachers, and people in the neighborhoods."

With a Master's degree in social behavioral sciences, Tod has also been certified as a substance abuse counselor. Every week night, he leads group discussions for male misdemeanor domestic violence offenders who have been mandated by the court system to complete a 12-week treatment program. In his groups, he identifies three types of domestic abuse: psychological, physical, and sexual.

"Psychological abuse is the most common," he says. "A lot of people don't even see it as abuse. **They think, 'No bruise, no**

blood, no harm, no foul.' I try to explain to them that psychological abuse is a problem. It can be more damaging than physical abuse."

But most offenders don't clearly understand what constitutes domestic violence, says Tod. "The average opinion of my clients is that a punch or an assault can lead to an arrest. They don't know that using certain profanity can get them arrested. And they don't know that if they damage their own property, disturb their neighbors by yelling, or use threats and intimidation during a domestic dispute, they can get arrested, too. It's on the books as disorderly conduct."

A number of factors can contribute to domestic violence, Tod says. "Power and control is of phenomenal importance in the offenders' relationships. They lack conflict resolution skills. And for a lot of them there is a payoff to domestic violence when they get abusive, they get their way."

Another factor is the poor parental role modeling that is carried from one generation to the next. "Some of the people I work with have horrendous

parenting skills," he says. "They are weak on discipline. They use physical means to punish their children. They tell the children they're bad, which results in them internalizing shame."

Tod also cites a factor he calls the "legitimization of violence" by offenders. "When is it okay to respond with violence?" he asks. "If someone spits in your face, do you punch that person? A lot of our clients tend to legitimize violence in certain situations promiscuity of a partner is one of them. Where the average person might respond with sadness, some of my clients might use their fists."

All of Tod's counseling takes place in group sessions. "The groups are open-ended," he says, "meaning that the people can start and end their sessions on different weeks. I begin by having new members introduce themselves and talk about their incidents in front of the other group members to determine if they are taking responsibility for their actions. Mutual respect is real important. No one can attack another individual."

Most of his clients are uncomfortable coming into treatment, Tod says. "At first, they think some psychiatrist is going to mess with their heads and say,

'You are a bad person.' Once they understand we want to help, we want to stop the violence and abuse, then a lot of them warm up, and we even have people who continue with after-care because they like the group so much. It tends to be a safe environment where they can talk about their feelings and not get ridiculed."

At the start, says Tod, clients usually hold some resentment. "They say, 'I'm in here because of a screwed up system,' or 'I didn't do anything. It was just a love push.' They minimize the incident.

They rationalize their behavior. Sometimes they say, 'I abused her because she pushed my buttons.' I teach them that no one pushes your buttons in life. When you respond to a situation, abusively or violently, you are pushing your own buttons. You make that choice, and you need to take responsibility."

One of the initial steps in treatment is to get offenders to admit that their abuse is a problem. "If they don't see violence as a problem," says Tod, "they're not going to do anything to change it. So getting them to see the

consequences is critical. It can prevent homicide."

During the 12 weekly sessions, Tod presents a number of different topics. "We deal with things like masculinity, male and female socialization, and abuse. I talk about communication, boundaries, drug and alcohol abuse, stress management, and intimacy issues. We also try to make some cognitive behavioral changes. For example, we do an exercise where the offenders put themselves in the place of their victims. In another, we talk about someone using violence against their daughter, sister, or mother. I ask, 'How would you feel if you came home and one of them had a black eye?' Usually, it is not okay to them. 'So,' I say, 'if a black eye is not okay for your sister, why should it be okay for your partner?'"

Tod encourages his clients to face their "issues" instead of suppressing them. "If they are angry at the group, they need to express it. I want to teach them the difference between constructive and destructive expressions of anger. Yes, anger is a natural human emotion, but if you allow yourself to fly into a rage and act out of impulse, it can lead to abuse, and that can result in your arrest."

Many offenders try to deal with their past actions, says Tod. "A lot of them want to apologize, but that is something I don't advocate. An apology is going to make the offender feel better, and it's going to make the victim feel better, but it's just going to perpetuate the cycle of violence. What I ask these gentlemen to do," says Tod striking his desk, "is make a commitment. I want them to commit to not being violent. I understand that it is hard for them, but it must be done."

Tod believes the most effective intervention for domestic violence offenders is a combination of arrest and treatment. "A night in jail is a very strong deterrent," he says, "especially for the middle and upper classes. Jail followed with treatment is a really healthy thing."

But Tod wants improvements in the mechanics of intervention. "I have seen one offender charged with misdemeanor domestic violence for repeatedly punching his partner's head with a closed fist, while another offender has been nabbed for simply screaming. Both ended up in my groups. We need someone in the system to say, 'This over here is mild domestic violence and needs 12 weeks of counseling, while that over there is

severe and needs a year-long program.' We should have a little more discretion in determining different degrees of domestic violence."

He wants victims to get better treatment, too. "I would like to see a mandatory order of protection activated on victims' behalf. I would also like to see them sent to victims' group counseling. It is very important. Our agency provides free victims' counseling, but it is not utilized enough."

Tod believes it is essential for everyone to understand that domestic violence is a community problem. "The public was educated about the dangers of drinking and driving, and that is no longer an accepted norm of social behavior. Now we need to educate the public about domestic violence. It's a problem just as dangerous."

To improve the counseling experience, Tod recommends that police provide more detail in their reports. "Police reports do a good job as far as testimony in court is concerned, but counselors need more information. For example, we want to know if the offender was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the arrest. We don't need a blood alcohol test,

just tell us, 'Did you smell alcohol? Was the person intoxicated?' We need as much information as we can get."

Tod also wants people to understand who the offenders are. "A common feeling is that they are all hairy, anti-social Neanderthals," he says. "You would be surprised at the different types of people we see from across all socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures. Some of them are considered very healthy members of our community. So, not every offender is a terrible person. A lot of people learned this behavior through their families and environments. And many have been in violent relationships before this. They can unlearn their behaviors. They can change but only if they make the decision to do so."



VOICES OF THE COURT SYSTEM

What happens when victims and offenders get into the system? This section presents the voices of four officers of the court: a judge, a public defender, a county prosecutor, and city prosecutor. Their stories, while often representing diametrically opposing views, are nevertheless interwoven by a common thread. They each tell of high caseloads, long hours, the frustration caused by victims who recant, and the ultimate goal of sending a message from the courts that violence of any kind will not be tolerated.

"Judge Johnson"

Municipal Court Judge

"I'm aware of how the cycle of violence works," says Nancy Johnson, a municipal court judge. "That awareness is a plus for a judge. You have to understand the psychology that is involved in the whole domestic violence cycle, otherwise you miss the mark. "

Judge Johnson owes her keen insight into domestic violence to a career as a

social worker prior to law school. "I worked with delinquent kids and so I had some interaction with the courts," she says. After earning her law degree, she clerked for a superior court judge before joining the Phoenix City Prosecutor's Office in the early 1980s. "I chose the prosecutor's office instead of criminal defense work because I felt that prosecution was really the place where you could make a change," she says.

After being appointed to the Municipal Court bench, Judge Johnson realized she was in a position to make an even bigger impact. "The fact that I am a woman sends certain messages to people. The fact that I am a person of color also sends messages to people. I really like the idea of being in the Municipal Court and I'll tell you why. This is a court where your average person has contact with the justice system. You have the opportunity to shape their impressions of the entire judicial process."

Many different crimes come under the jurisdiction of the city court, Judge Johnson says. "We handle a great deal of DUIs, plus any number of domestic violence

related complaints such as assault and criminal damage, threats and intimidation, and violations of orders of protection. We also handle shoplifting, theft, prostitution, and traffic violations. We essentially cover everything except felonies."

The situation can be difficult at times. "Some days you have a courtroom with wall-to-wall people. There is no place to sit. It's hot, stuffy. You cannot catch your breath. Tempers are short so when you finally do get to a particular matter, the people involved take out all their frustrations on you. But it's just part of the job, and you learn to anticipate it."

She says some victims don't realize that a judge must remain impartial. "Many people wish for a judge to lean one way or another in terms of the allegations. That's not what I'm here for. My role is simply to listen to the evidence and then make a decision based upon that evidence. Unfortunately, many of the alleged victims think that if the state files a complaint, then everyone should see that the defendant is guilty. That isn't enough, but it is sometimes very difficult to

explain to them how the system works."

Prosecutors could help the judicial process, she says.

"If prosecutors would take time to educate the alleged victims about the role of the court, they wouldn't be caught off guard so much."

Instead, many alleged victims leave angry when the court has made a finding of 'not guilty.' They read more into that than what the court intended. A verdict of 'not guilty' is not an endorsement of the defendant's behavior or a moral judgment. It simply means that the state did not carry its burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt."

Nevertheless, Judge Johnson recognizes that victims are likely to feel revictimized by the legal system if they are not handled with sensitivity and understanding. "I think that everyone who comes in contact with these people has to realize that their egos are very fragile. Their self-esteem is very low. I'm not suggesting that we all act as counselors and social workers just that we be more sensitive."

By way of example, she explains how 911 operators might make a difference. "It takes a very special person to do that job. When people are calling with what they perceive to be a big problem even though it may be minuscule in the larger scheme of things the operator must not dismiss or pooh-pooh the caller. If the caller gets the impression that the police operator doesn't think their problem is a big deal, then it reinforces the feeling of helplessness that many victims of domestic violence already have."

Officers, too, need to understand the cycle of violence, she says. "When they respond to a call and say 'This really isn't a big deal,' well maybe it isn't today. But if they let it go, next month or next year it's going to be something worse."

She believes that judges should also receive training on domestic violence. "I'm not saying judges need to be psychologists, but I do think they need to be aware of programs that can assess and treat people involved in domestic violence situations. We make our most important contribution through effective

sentencing, and that requires some baseline of knowledge and information."

Johnson describes her own approach to a domestic violence case. "Once you have gone through the trial process and have found the defendant guilty of a domestic violence crime, at that point you are in a position to do some innovative sentencing if that's what your are of a mind to do. I think this court is a forerunner in recognizing that there are situations where incarceration is not the answer, where counseling is more appropriate. By being creative in your sentencing, you're not only dealing with the violator, but also fashioning orders under probation to protect the victim. And that's important."

Orders of protection are a two-edged sword for the judge. "I am always encouraged when I handle orders of protection for victims of domestic violence. It means they have finally decided to get out and to go someplace safe. And then to see them later on and hear, 'I really did go and I'm doing fine now,' is extremely gratifying.

"But orders of protection are also my biggest frustration," she says. "There are times

when people come in the next week and they want to quash the order. If I have concerns that there may be some coercion or threats involved, I can set it for hearing and have both parties come in. But once I am satisfied that the request is not a result of threats or violence, I have to abide by their wishes. That is very frustrating."

A related frustration is police handling of domestic violence complaints. "There have been many times when people have come in requesting orders of protection and said, 'Well, I called the police, but they wouldn't come out and take a report.' This ties my hands. You have to have that record, that documentation, to issue the order. Likewise, the prosecutor has to have documentation if she is going to be able to successfully prosecute a case."

In the judge's view, domestic violence cases demand a personal touch. "When you are dealing with highly volatile, emotional situations, someone whether it is the city prosecutor, the defense counsel, or some social service entity must do some hand holding and explaining. Too many victims fall through the cracks. They don't have the advocate from the

prosecutor's office, they aren't in therapy, and they're surprised to hear there are shelters. In my court I can point them in the right direction because of my personal background and experience. But there is no requirement that says a judge has to do that."

At times, Judge Johnson says she has literally called the city prosecutor to get a victim's advocate assigned. "I've said, 'Look, your prosecutor has a witness in here and I think you need to get someone down here for her.' And they've been very good about responding. I don't have problems in that regard. But there are some people who just don't avail themselves of the services. And these people fall through the cracks despite our best efforts."

Judge Johnson sees hope in the common ground that has been established among key participants in the domestic violence system. "I like to think we are beyond the time where the consensus was that domestic violence was just a 'family matter.' Domestic violence is a serious crime and must be treated as such. We are now seeing judges being appointed who are aware of the seriousness of the crime. I believe that aggressive prosecution and increasing public awareness that it is not acceptable and that

there are options will go a long way toward improving the domestic violence situation."

"Alex"
Public Defender

"Almost all of my clients are easily proven guilty," says Alex, a public defender who represents people unable to afford a private attorney.

"The evidence is usually overwhelming. All the witnesses are lined up against them. They've actually confessed on videotape. Yet my clients still say, 'I didn't do anything wrong.'"

They actually believe there shouldn't be any consequences to their actions."

Despite the guilt of his clients, Alex believes the public defender's offices is a necessary check against the power of the prosecutor. "The system's completely out of whack," he says, "because the county prosecutors have all the power. This is a frightening concept. Mandatory sentencing allows them to tell the judge what the sentence is going to be for a plea bargain, and if the judge doesn't like it the prosecutor can back out of the plea knowing that our

clients will get more time. I think we should shift the balance of power back to the court. Judges, I think, are better qualified to exercise sentencing discretion than a county attorney just out of law school."

As a public defender serving Maricopa County, Alex practices only in Superior Court and handles only felony cases. "Felony charges are rarely the result of the first incidence of violence in a relationship," he says. "By the time I get a case, it is usually pretty severe. I have one case where the guy pulled a knife on his wife because she wasn't cooking the pork chops properly. And that's not all that unusual. But if you spend enough time with someone you get past the fact that he's committed a horrible crime and you start to care about what happens to him."

It can be a jarring, Alex says, to be reminded that his clients are charged with violent acts. But he doesn't feel that men charged with domestic violence felonies actually hate women. Rather, he says, they are obsessed with dominance. "My clients are not able to relinquish control. They become paranoid and think their partner is always cheating on them. It's hard for them to understand that

their ideas are often the wrong ideas."

For their own good, Alex tries to convince them otherwise. "If you don't accept responsibility for your acts under this system, you're going to prison for years on end. But these are very difficult clients. They don't appreciate the consequences of their crimes. Even after putting his wife in the hospital, a client will express great love for her. He honestly does not believe she will prosecute him."

In many instances, the offender is correct, says Alex. **"What is weird is that in most domestic violence cases the victim is calling me all the time. She wants the case dropped.** She doesn't want to talk to her advocate, the county attorney, because the county attorney is viewed as an obstacle. And that's because the county attorney's office isn't dropping cases just because a victim wants them to any more. In the long run, I think that will be a positive thing. In the short run, some of the wives and victims may get hurt."

Safeguarding victims from further violence, says Alex, is a continuing problem. "I am relatively unimpressed with orders of protection

because they're violated constantly and there's no punishment there's no hammer over the guy's head. The cops aren't especially interested, and in a way I don't blame them. Typically, the wife gets an order of protection, then she'll get back together with the husband while the order is still in effect. Then they have a fight and she calls the cops. But they know the next day she is going to invite her husband back home. So, it's tough. I'm not sure what the police officers are supposed to do in these situations."

The work load for a public defender is heavy, says Alex typically 30 to 45 active cases in front of five different judges. Often he is supposed to appear in two different courtrooms simultaneously. Because of this, and the inefficient way the system operates, he doesn't get much time with his clients. "Justice Court each week is where we first meet our clients, at the preliminary hearing where the state is required to establish probable cause. I'll get maybe four or five new clients on that day, and it's the first time I meet them so it's important to establish rapport."

Winning client trust is not easy, he says. "Our

clients don't choose us and we don't choose them. We're assigned. So my role is to build up some confidence with the client to protect him as much as possible from unreasonable punishment. But it's frustrating because it's the nature of my job that my clients don't trust me. For example, I have to be careful they don't see me acting friendly toward the county attorneys. They don't understand that we have to get along, that it's more than likely to help their case, rather than hinder it. But they're paranoid and they'll say, 'I saw you talking to her [the county attorney].' And it's like, 'Yes, I was talking about the case.' And you'll get, 'Sure. You work for the same people as the county attorney. You get paid a bonus for every innocent client you plead guilty. You're afraid to go to trial.'"

To gain the confidence of his clients, Alex makes after-work jail visits a daily routine. "It's hard to meet someone in justice court," he says. "And in my experience, the clients I need to talk to never call me. So my purpose in making jail visits is to spend time with my clients. I don't think they will trust me and listen to me until I do. I can't just say the first time I meet them, 'Hi, my name is Alex, and

this is the county attorney's plea offer: You are going to jail.' They aren't going to take that deal even if it is reasonable until I develop trust with them."

Looking to the future, Alex hopes for a tremendous increase in prevention programs for offenders. "Right now, realistically, there aren't any prevention services available, because if you're poor you aren't going to be able to afford them. So there is no way any of our clients are getting help until they're in trouble. And there is no outreach from the substance abuse community either, which I don't understand, because very few of my clients would get involved with violence unless they were doing an illicit drug or excessive drinking. Yet the situation is that the for-profit substance abuse programs attract only working people with insurance. And the nonprofits, well, there are almost none that my clients would ever go to."

Probation services need an upgrade as well, says Alex. "Given the resources probation departments have I think they work well. But their caseloads are extraordinarily high so we end up with a false sense of security about probation. The truth is, if the probation officers don't have time to spend with offenders, they

can violate their orders and nothing's going to happen. I think we need to pump more money and effort into probation services."

In the long run, Alex wants to see system-wide changes. "First, we need to provide more services up front rather than at the end. For example, I don't see any services for my clients' children, who witness atrocious violence on a regular basis. Everyone in the system knows that a generation raised in domestic violence is going to appear in court someday themselves. But until we do something other than just paying lip service to counseling, I don't see it stopping."

"Elaine"

Maricopa County Prosecutor

"Domestic violence is everybody's business,"

says Elaine, a prosecutor and bureau chief of the Family Violence Unit of the Maricopa County Attorney's Office. "When you see a woman hitting her kid in the grocery store that's your problem. When you live in an apartment complex and you hear the couple upstairs beating each other up that's your problem. We want to get this message out to the community: It's everybody's business regardless of what

walk of life you're in, regardless of your socioeconomic class. It's everybody's problem because the only common denominator in the street crime that we're all so afraid of is a violent home environment."

Elaine's journey to the position of bureau chief for the County Attorney's Office was fairly straightforward. "I always wanted to be a prosecutor," she says. But she and the members of her unit had to become experts on domestic violence the hard way by trial and error. "All we do every day is read police reports and go to court," she says. "We don't write contracts or draft wills or do any of the things that you often think of when you think of lawyers. We're courtroom lawyers."

As Elaine describes her job with its joys, frustrations, and challenges it is clear that she is on a mission.

"Sure the pay is lousy compared to what we could make in the private sector. And, in many ways, it's a thankless job. So most people are doing it because it's where their heart is. John or Jane Doe envision some big machine handles their case

when, in reality, it's being handled by a few individuals: the police officer who is assigned to the case, the prosecutor who is assigned to the case, the offender's attorney, and a specific judge. But the key player in the whole dynamic is the prosecutor. The prosecutor has the sole power in determining whether that case goes forward or whether it is dropped."

The Family Violence Unit, formed within the last year, employs seven attorneys, two investigators, three victim advocates, and various support staff. They handle domestic violence felony cases, child homicides, child abuse, stalking cases, and elder abuse. In their work, the members of the unit interact with social service agencies, the courts, the probation office, and the police department.

Elaine describes the office as "deluged." She says, "Our caseloads right now are 30 to 55 per attorney, which is way too high. Monday mornings are the worst because if a suspect is arrested, and is in custody, we only have 48 hours to file a charge on that person. We call those 'in-jails.'"

Elaine describes how "in-jails" are processed by her office. "You read the police

report and decide whether or not you can prove the case. We have to prove the case beyond a reasonable doubt to a jury. It's the highest burden in the law. When you look at jury nullification all over the country like the O.J. case, where they had more evidence that we ever have it's a very high burden of proof. We never, ever have as much evidence as the O.J. case. We have to bear that in mind when we review a police report.

"Police officers often get frustrated with us when we turn down a case. It's easy to understand their frustration, especially when they know the case. The officer may get called out to that house every Saturday night like clockwork, but without prior convictions, we have no choice but to treat it as a first time offense."

Luckily, according to Elaine, the Family Violence Unit and the Phoenix Police Department have formed a very effective working relationship. "All the attorneys know all the detectives," says Elaine. "And sometimes you end up being best friends because you have very close working relationships."

A close working relationship with the police is especially important because Elaine's unit does not have resources to do its own investigations.

Prosecutors have to rely on the patrol officer taking the report and the police detectives who conduct the follow-up investigation.

"Right now, we are working on a checklist for police officers," she explains. "Interviewing the suspect, taking photographs of the victim's injuries, interviewing children in the home, recording the victim's statement or getting her to sign a written statement all of these things are critical for us to successfully prosecute, especially when the victim comes in after a few weeks and says, 'I never said that.'"

Elaine explains that her office represents the state of Arizona, not the individual victim. "Our job is to protect the community. We try to keep the streets safer. We try to bring justice to the community, impose appropriate sanctions. We also try to give victims a voice, but we are not attorneys for the victim. In fact, especially in the domestic violence area, what we want and what the victim wants are often in conflict."

According to Elaine, victims who change their stories, or "recant," create one of the most

frustrating aspects of her job.

"Police officers do not lie," she says. "That is a safe general rule. They don't fabricate statements and put them in their reports. When you have a police report in front of you that says, 'Jane Doe told me her husband pointed the gun at her head and said, 'I'm going to kill you, bitch,' you can bet on that being exactly what happened. But then the victim comes in and tells you she never said that to the police officer. What is really amazing is the number of women that come in here, look you in the eye and say, 'Yeah, he had the gun pointed at my head, but I wasn't really afraid.' Somewhere they've learned that we have to prove the victim was in reasonable fear of imminent physical injury to prove our case."

Elaine emphasizes that although victims may want the charges dropped, and a majority of victims do backtrack, her office will not drop those charges. This is known as "victimless prosecution." Elaine explains: "The County Attorney has always had the philosophy that a victim's reluctance to prosecute should only be one factor. With the formation of this unit, we've gone to an even more stringent policy of

victimless prosecution. If there is any means by which we can prove a case without our victim, we will do so."

Traditionally, according to Elaine, police and prosecutors have had the attitude that if a victim doesn't want to help herself, why bother? "It's not difficult to understand, she says. "We've got all these other crimes out there with victims who want to help us out, who are very concerned, who want our support. Why waste resources on prosecuting cases where the victim won't even help us? But when you learn about the dynamics of domestic violence, you learn that most women are beaten when they try to leave. You learn that even if the woman does leave, most offenders will just move on to another abusive relationship. And without education and support, the victim stands a good chance of ending up in another abusive relationship herself. Worse, people who are beating their significant others are also beating the kids in the home, and those kids grow up to be batterers, too. So when you understand these dynamics, you understand why we should proceed even when the victim recants."

Elaine is adamant in her belief that everyone involved in the system must be educated on domestic

violence. "We hit a brick wall with the courts not understanding this dynamic seeing it, instead, as a domestic problem that doesn't require serious intervention, or an anger control problem that just needs counseling. They think that if a batterer says it's not going to happen again, then it's not. But the domestic violence issue reminds me of the education we received in the seventies and eighties on sexual assault.

We had to learn that rape is not a sex crime, it's a hate crime. Now we're undergoing the same kind of thing with domestic violence. It's not an anger problem, it's a power and control problem. When batterers feel their power and control slipping away, they get more and more aggressive to recapture that power, and that is why more women are beaten when they try to leave."

Despite long hours, heavy caseloads, reluctant victims and constant troubleshooting, Elaine describes her job as "great." She says, "It is tremendously rewarding when we successfully prosecute a case in which a scared domestic violence victim recants. We take the burden off her shoulders. And when we successfully reach an end to that case and the perpetrator

gets treatment, jail time, or whatever is appropriate, that is very satisfying. Protecting innocent victims who are being preyed upon by people on power trips is very gratifying. It's why I went to law school in the first place."

Elaine says the lessons she and her colleagues have learned are being integrated into the strategies the unit uses. "We're tackling the age-old communication problem between police and prosecutors: they don't understand what we do, and we don't understand what they do. So we have instituted mandatory ride-alongs in our office. Every attorney must ride at least one shift per year with a patrol officer so we can better understand what the police go through on the streets. We are also improving the lines of communication between our offices. We take weekly walks over there and they come over here. In this way, we are educating each other and it is working."

Nevertheless, much remains to be done. "We are exploring the possibility of starting our own offender treatment program out of this office. Studies across the country show that short-term treatment is just not effective, but there is no long-term offender program in Arizona. We envision a program for first time

misdeemeanor offenders that would give them a choice: either go through this program and avoid being prosecuted, or get it as your sentence if you are successfully prosecuted."

In the end, law enforcement can only do so much, says Elaine. "I think education needs to start at the grade school level. We need to

approach domestic violence like we did drunk driving. Today we don't let a friend drive drunk. Well, tomorrow you don't let friends hit their kids or their spouses. We all have to really get this: It's not okay to hit your wife for any reason. And it's not okay to hit your husband. It's not okay to hit your kids. Thou shalt not hit. Okay?"

"Beth"

City of Phoenix Prosecutor

"Just once, I want people to feel the same passion that I feel when I see the faces of the women and the kids who are the victims of domestic violence," says Beth, a City of Phoenix prosecutor. "The worst part is knowing we'll see the victims' kids in 15 years."

Beth, whose caseload consists mainly of domestic violence complaints, says

part of the problem is that victims are often unwilling to prosecute. "Men don't report abuse because of societal perceptions. Women, if they complain, usually only report physical assault and criminal damage to property. And after working these cases," she says, "I understand why victims don't always want to prosecute. The level of fear is very high. We must keep victims' addresses confidential to protect them."

The lack of reporting thrusts Beth into a secondary role as advocate for the victim in addition to her primary role as prosecutor. "We need quicker action for victims," she says. "They think nothing is being done when a case drags on. We also need the victim to understand what happens in the courtroom. It's frustrating how slowly change takes place. It's frustrating that we don't have the ability to take photos, to have adequate records, to have tape recordings. And the lack of funding slows us down. This is serious, because problems surface when the time to bring cases to trial becomes too long. For example, tapes of 911 calls are only kept for 60 days."

Beth is a small, quiet woman who, nevertheless, fills the room with the

power of her feelings. Though she is tense as she talks, she knows that others have seen the damage inflicted by domestic violence. So she works with those in the system who share her dedication to erasing this problem.

"In my job I can help put someone in jail who should be in jail. I can help make sure offenders get counseling. I can teach the attorneys in my office how to better prosecute these cases. I can also teach the police department what they can do to help us. Some of the police officers already understand all this," she says. "They know we need more funding and training."

One way Beth works with police is to discuss with them how they report domestic violence calls. "There is an unconscious tendency to blame the victim," she says. While the police may start out sympathetic toward the victim, the excitement and rage of the victim sometimes causes them to side with the abuser, who often seems quieter and calmer at the scene.

"What we train police to do is understand the nature of the victim's excited utterances, to understand that the victim is agitated and fearful. We also ask officers to take photos and

document the times when the assaults occurred.

"I think they understand the importance of this. We need to have those photos and tapes. Sometimes victims think that just because they called the police it is enough to get a conviction. It's not. We have to follow rules of evidence and rules of criminal procedure."

Again, inadequate funding causes problems, says Beth. "We need equipment to have reports scanned in electronically. This would help gain quicker action from the city. And we need more crisis intervention teams. They're only on call three days a week now. They need to be on call seven days a week, available to go right to the scene with the police. They are indispensable because they help provide an on-going link with the victim."

Beth stresses the need for change at all levels. "This is a societal issue. We need resources, training, education, and funding. We need to change society so that in ten years the domestic violence unit can be disbanded." Education and communication about domestic violence is a key to dealing with the problem, Beth says. "Schoolchildren from kindergarten to high school should be saturated with the idea that no one

has to tolerate abusive behaviors. There is never an excuse to use physical violence. Calling assault 'just a little shove' never makes it right. This behavior can't be tolerated in the future. We have to make changes now.

"Keeping communication going is important, too. Information about what can be done, what can't be done, is key to changing behaviors. Pro-prosecutorial stances must be taken. **We must give the defendant the clear message that violence is not acceptable not in the home, not anywhere.**"



VOICES OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

What is it like to go out on a domestic violence call? This section presents five voices representing a chain of command within the Phoenix Police Department. It opens with the story of a 911 operator often the first person in contact with the scene of an incident of domestic violence. This is followed by the viewpoint of a police officer who responds to calls for service issued by the operator. Next are the voices of a sergeant with the Phoenix Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit and her supervisor, a lieutenant within the department. Finally, there is the voice of Dennis Garrett, the Chief of Police for the Phoenix Police Department.

The main theme that emerges from these stories is one that emphasizes the need for training of all personnel regarding the collection of evidence and preparation of reports. Without appropriate documentation, cases cannot proceed in a timely and efficient manner much to the dismay of court officials, victims, and offenders alike.

"Carol" 911 Operator

"The biggest frustration in handling a domestic violence call," says Carol a 911 operator for the Phoenix Police Department, "is knowing I can't do anything except get someone to respond. Sometimes that doesn't seem like enough, so I talk to the caller. I tell them there is counseling available but you just know they're not going to take advantage of it. That's the frustrating part. They're going to go right back into that relationship and call me again because they're not getting the help they need."

Carol has been with the Police Department for 20 years, more than 16 of those years as a 911 operator in the communications bureau. She says she finds her job rewarding. "People need someone to turn to when they're in danger, and we're the first place they call. I like helping people and it gets me involved with what's going on out there."

Carol explains the role of a 911 operator. "We are basically the answering point for the Phoenix Police Department. Our goal is to get as much information as possible about a call so the officers know what kind of situation they are going into. If we don't provide them with enough information, they could go in blindly and that would be dangerous, especially if there

are weapons involved. Information is crucial to the officer."

The work is fast-paced, says Carol. "On a typical day, I come in and log on the computer. As I soon as I do that, someone comes on the line. So I sit there and just answer phone calls, one right after the other. When I used to keep track, I took about 225 calls on an eight hour shift. In summer, when school's out, our traffic is a little higher."

The 911 operators have a standard procedure to follow. "We enter each call into the computer: the type, the priority, the address, and the name of the victim or the person calling. We ask for their phone number, too, in case they want to be contacted, and we also ask information about what's happening on the call. This information then goes to the dispatcher who prints it out on her computer and radio dispatches it to an officer. When we're busy, the dispatcher is just overwhelmed."

As the first contact at the Police Department, the 911 operator determines how fast a call is handled by the officers. "We decide what priority to give a call," says Carol. "A 'priority one' means there's some kind of physical violence. It's known as a 'hot call' and carries a

response time of less than five minutes. A 'priority two' call is urgent. Perhaps we'll have two people arguing but it hasn't turned physically violent yet, so the officer responds in under ten minutes. A 'priority three' call is more or less after the crime has occurred. There is no danger to the victim, but a police report needs to be filed. As far as daily traffic goes, we get a lot of calls for service during the day shift, but they're usually lower priority calls. The night shift is where we really get a lot of our priority ones and twos."

Domestic violence calls are particularly troubling to Carol. "When I talk to a caller involved in a domestic violence situation they'll say, 'What am I going to do?' I usually suggest they get out of there and find some help. And I talk to them because sometimes they just need an ear. Unfortunately, I can't really sit there and talk for a long period of time because I have to answer other phone calls.

"But in a domestic situation where someone is injured, we use what we call the 'buddy system.' If I'm the one who receives the call, I'll stay on the phone so I can keep updated about what's going on. I'll have another operator call the fire department for me. She will tell the paramedics what

address they need to go to, and usually they will 'stage' until the situation is under control. Staging means that the paramedics will park down the street close to the area, but they won't go to the scene until they know it's not dangerous for them. The police officers respond immediately five minutes or less.

The training period for a new 911 operator is extensive. "When we hire people to become 911 operators," says Carol, "they start with a five week class where they learn the laws and how to respond to calls. We have one whole class dedicated just to domestic violence; it's part of the training that we do. When they've completed the class they go out on the 'floor' and work with a trainer. The length of time a trainer stays with a new operator depends on how fast the operator can pick up the job. Ten weeks would be average."

Carol sees substance abuse as playing a major role in domestic violence. "They have methamphetamines. They have cocaine. They have crack. And the children are seeing the parents shooting themselves up. I have people calling saying, 'So-and-so is doing crack in front of their baby.' It's just too easy to get a hold of that kind of stuff."

She believes that drugs and children are an especially explosive mix. "Many children and teenagers are involved with drugs. At first, the parents cannot believe their child is a drug user, but then there's lots of violence, irrational behavior, withdrawing from the family. All of a sudden, the child will pick up a knife or some weapon, and that's when we get the family calling and the mother screaming, 'My daughter is out of control!' or 'My son is out of control!'"

Carol feels that domestic violence education efforts should focus on children because there is a greater chance of success with them than with adults. "We can let them know that it's not okay for daddy or mommy to fight, that it's not okay for daddy to shove mom against the wall or hit her in the face, that it's not okay for daddy to hit the baby. Kids need to understand that these are not acceptable behaviors and that they should call 911 to get some help if they ever see them happening. I think if we work with the children at an early age, as they get older they may think twice before making a fist and hitting somebody."

"Paul"
Police Officer

"A domestic violence call is one of the most stressful and dangerous situations for a police officer to be in because you never know who placed the call," says Paul, a Phoenix police officer assigned to the South Phoenix area and currently serving in the Community Action Program. "It could be the wife or the son calling. Or it could be the neighbors calling because they can't take the screaming any longer. So when you get there, you always have to watch your back.

"I've arrested males who have hit their female partners and the female jumps on top of you and starts fighting. You turn around and say, 'I don't understand. You just got assaulted. I am trying to take this guy out so that you can be safe.'

"So the victim may hit you over the head with something because she doesn't want him to go to jail that has happened before. And then you have the rest of the family: ten people want to see him get arrested, ten people don't. So, you don't know what to expect in these situations.

It's not like you get there and know who the bad guy is."

Paul is a third generation police officer. Both his father and his grandfather retired from a police department in the east, and his brother is currently a 13-year officer there. Paul, however, chose to work in Phoenix because, in his words, "the weather and the people are a lot nicer here." With a Masters degree in public administration and four years as a patrol officer under his belt, he hopes to take the sergeant's examination soon.

From his experience working primarily in a racially and ethnically diverse area, Paul has come to believe that different cultures vary widely in their outlook on domestic violence. "One of the things that really surprised me," Paul says with some hesitation, "was the Hispanic culture's attitude towards women especially Hispanic males from Mexico. Guys I've worked with who are very close to the Hispanic community tell me that wives are sometimes treated more like property than a respected spouse not someone to come home to and consult about family decisions. Basically, these women were there to do what the men told them to do.

"A lot of times when we would get an anonymous domestic violence call, we would pull up to the scene and there would be an Hispanic male from Mexico and his girlfriend or wife. We would bring a Spanish-speaking officer to help with the investigation, and after determining that an assault had occurred, we would arrest the guy. Often he didn't understand why we were taking him to jail. It was unbelievable to him that he was not allowed to hit his wife or use physical force to control his family. But the way the law is written, we technically have to make an arrest for any domestic violence physical assault. Sometimes even the women didn't want them to go to jail they weren't the ones who called."

Paul says the African-American women he encountered tended to deal with domestic violence much differently. "As far as I saw, if a woman was hit she pretty much told you what happened. And most of the time, she was willing to prosecute. She wanted the man to go to jail. That was one of the major differences that I saw in my time on patrol. But I don't want to make this a race issue. Domestic violence happens in all cultures. They just deal with it differently."

One of the biggest frustrations in law enforcement for Paul has been the lack of victim support in prosecuting offenders. **"The majority of the time when we went to court to testify, the victims wouldn't even show up. The case would be dropped and the men put back on the street."**

Paul would like to change that. "If I were in charge of the system, I would make people more responsible. The offender would sit in jail two or three days instead of the usual 24 hours. If he got out on bail, certain restrictions would be put in place. For example, an injunction against harassment would automatically be filed with the court stating the rules and regulations the offender had to follow to stay out of jail. It would include things like 'no threats,' which goes a little bit further than just 'no hitting.' In other words, it would say, 'Next time you will be arrested not only if you smack your wife, but also if you threaten her.'

"Another change I would make is to automatically slap an order of protection against the abuser. Often, when an abuser goes to jail,

we tell the victim to get an order of protection so that we can respond more quickly next time, but usually she doesn't. I think that an order of protection should be automatically served on him, whether or not she requests it, just so she can feel safe."

Changes in the law would reduce the rate of domestic violence, Paul says. "I think stiffer penalties would cut down on a lot of this, really slow down the revolving door that we have. And in situations where the victim doesn't show up to prosecute, the law should allow the officer to testify on the victim's behalf from information gathered at the scene. Then the offender won't be able to say to his victim, 'If you show up and testify, I will knock the hell out of you when I get out.' I think that happens a lot. It should be automatic that the police officer who took the report is able to testify on behalf of the victim."

Paul feels, however, that there is a problem with how police officers are perceived in the court system. "When you look at people in the courts, you see well educated people lots of law degrees. Many officers, on the other hand, have only a high school education, and some don't write well their reports don't make sense. Then the prosecutors say, 'I

can't make heads or tails out of this. How am I going to prosecute this case?' They get the perception that these guys are inept out there.

"But sometimes your report isn't well-written because, right after you arrest the guy and put him in jail, all of a sudden another emergency call comes in shots fired, a serious situation. You have to respond. Then, six hours later when it's all over, you're trying to remember what happened at the domestic violence call. Sure, you have a few notes scribbled on some paper, but you look at them and say, 'Oh man, I didn't really get everything down here.' It happens. And this is one of the things that hurts us the lack of respect between the attorneys and the police officers."

Paul says that one way to improve the domestic violence system would be through the Police Academy. "The first thing that new cadets should be aware of is the need to gather as much detailed information as possible when dealing with domestic violence. They need to put the offender into the system. A lot of nights when it's busy out there, and they have a lot of calls waiting, they might get a situation where it seems borderline whether a guy should go to

jail or not. They might want to just take him down the block before going to the next call. But when a situation like that happens, the offender definitely needs to be brought into the system. Even if they don't arrest the person, they should at least write a report and send it to a detective, have something on file to explain what happened that night. But a lot of times these things are just blown off. It could cause problems later on," Paul says.

"I would tell a cadet, 'Even if you are busy out there, a domestic violence call is one situation where you have to do the right thing. You can't cut corners because it could hurt somebody later on. It could also hurt you, because if you show that you are the type of guy who is cutting corners, and a liability issue comes back, it is something you'll have to take through your whole career.' So that is one thing I'd stress: make sure you get the offender in the system."

Paul also believes that officers might benefit from a greater sensitivity. I think a lot of officers need to put themselves in the victim's place. Too often, they treat victims as numbers. They say, 'I have ten domestic violence cases coming in today. What I am going to do to get rid of each case?' instead of, 'What would it

be like to have to depend on this guy for a livelihood and at the same time have to worry about getting beat up by him?' If a victim doesn't have the education to go out and take care of herself and her family, she is completely trapped in her situation."

Paul thinks that court personnel, too, need to put themselves in the victim's position. "If they did that," Paul says, "they would take domestic violence more seriously than they do now. Prosecutors would not be so quick to plea bargain cases down. Maybe judges would impose stiffer sentences. Even the legislature might stiffen the penalties."

"Penalties should be stiffer," says Paul. "It would make people think twice about doing something to their family."

"Diana"
*Police Sergeant,
Domestic Violence Unit*

"Many of the problems that affect America today are directly related to the breakdown of the family," says Diana, an 18-year veteran of the Phoenix Police Department. "And domestic violence is where we deal with this breakdown the most. These are not insignificant family crimes

we're dealing with. These are crimes that affects the fabric of our country."

Diana joined the police in the late 1970s because she saw it as a way to help people. "Police work offered a great opportunity to make a difference," she says. At the time, she was the only female in her recruit class to graduate from Police Academy. Today she is one of two police sergeants supervising the Phoenix Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit, which is made up of 14 detectives responsible for handling all domestic violence cases referred to the police. They average 150 new cases every month, and the first step in each of these new cases is to review the report from the responding patrol officer.

"We have to make sure the officer captures all the information we need," says Diana. "Otherwise the detectives have to supplement." This means they might have to take the time to collect new evidence, re-interview victims, or question children and neighbors who were not included in the original investigation.

Completed reports are then filed for prosecution: felonies with the County Attorney's Office, misdemeanors with the City Prosecutor's Office.

"At that point," Diana explains, "the prosecutors review the case and determine if they are going to prosecute. If they need more information, they come back to the detectives. And from then on, these detectives are instrumental in the case in going to grand juries, preliminary hearings, trials, whatever the case requires."

But the detectives are not freed from other responsibilities. "As a detective, you have a lot of housekeeping to do on a daily basis," says Diana. "If a suspect is arrested, you have to get all these pieces of paper into the computer system so that the individual doesn't get out on a technicality. You have to make sure your evidence is impounded correctly. You have to make sure to release property or have evidence destroyed or whatever. You have to spend hours every day reviewing your cases. So, it's a huge job. And, **yes, we make mistakes. Yes, we drop the ball sometimes. But when you stand back and look at what we do on a day-to-day basis, I think we do a pretty phenomenal job.**"

Diana's detectives deal with nearly all of the players in

any domestic violence case victims, perpetrators, witnesses, patrol officers, city prosecutors, county prosecutors, and judges, just to name a few. She feels frustration at not being able to please everyone all the time. Take victims, for example.

"Basically what we do is give the victim a card with all this information on it," Diana says. "There is no way a detective can set those people up with all of the social services or counseling or assistance they need."

Assisting with this task is the Police Department's newly funded "counselor advocate" who is assigned to help victims find social services. The counselor advocate is someone to whom officers and detectives can go to talk about victims' needs.

"She's taken a real burden off of the officers," says Diana. "They can go to her and say, 'Look, this family needs a lot of social services here, or the victim needs this or that.' I think that Phoenix is very progressive in having someone like the counselor advocate on staff."

But perhaps the most important working relationship for Diana's unit is with prosecutors. "You have to see it from their point of view," she explains.

"They look at the likelihood of prosecution on a particular charge. Sometimes, to us, it seems pretty simplistic. But when you get over there with the attorneys, they see it far differently. County prosecutors may see they're not going to get a felony conviction, so they drop it down to a misdemeanor. Then the city gets those cases."

But whether a charge is felony or misdemeanor is not the point for Diana. "The fact that it occurred is what's important," she says. "The fact that in the state of Arizona, in the county of Maricopa, in the city of Phoenix, we're saying, 'We're not going to tolerate this kind of abuse.' That is what's important. Whether it's a minor or a major assault, we need to get on the same page as far as prosecution is concerned."

Speedy prosecution is also paramount. "The single most important issue to me," says Diana, "is that we make arrests and handle cases as quickly and efficiently as possible. I think that lingering cases create many problems. The victim becomes more frightened or more inaccessible, or she becomes more intimidated by whomever is battering her. So we have a responsibility to prosecute quickly and

swiftly. If there is one thing that we can do, it's to send the message that we're going to arrest and prosecute batterers."

One of Diana's priorities for expediting domestic violence cases is to train patrol officers to complete on-the-scene reports more thoroughly. "If we have to spend time going back to add this or do that, well, what we're talking about is a lag in getting this report down to a prosecutor. We're going to develop a protocol for officers. When they go out there, they do it one time and we don't have to repeat."

In the patrol officers' defense, Diana points out the turmoil they face. "These officers get out on a serious domestic violence case, and pretty soon they start getting beat up by other calls for services. They hear 'hot calls' going off all around them, and they're minimally staffed, and so they can't always do the job that needs to be done. That's why training is so important, so we get the kind of reports that we need to go forward."

Diana's detectives in the Domestic Violence Unit provide part of the training for patrol officers. Although the detectives are housed in the central office of the Police Department, they go

into the precincts to work their cases.

"This affords a better working relationship between the detectives and the patrol officers." Diana says, "We can get a better handle on the kind of reports coming out of that precinct. So, if the reports from, say, Officer Smith are not the caliber we're looking for, our detective will contact Officer Smith and start working with him or her."

Another of Diana's priorities is to upgrade the skills of the Domestic Violence Unit detectives themselves. "We're trying to do more forensic-type training in the unit. To me, it's real important that, when the detectives go out and some guy has assaulted and bitten his wife, they see the evidence and photograph it appropriately and do whatever else they need to do. I want them to be just as well trained, and just as well thought of when they get to a scene as homicide detectives."

Her reasoning is practical. "We work many cases with homicide," Diana says. "A case that starts out as a very serious assault might turn into a homicide before the end of the day. The victim could die."

Such domestic violence homicides, says Diana, need top priority. **"Not that every homicide isn't important but, to me, a woman who has been battered to death how much more important can it be?"** When she's left three little kids, you know? It's not down the rung of importance because she was killed as a result of a fight with her husband instead of by some stranger who's broken into her home. It impacts the family just as greatly, and it impacts the public even more. If we're saying that you can get away with killing your wife, or just do minimal time because it's 'only' a domestic violence crime, then we're getting exactly what we deserve."

Diana believes that women are not always treated fairly under the law. "FBI statistics really got my attention the other day. Women who kill their batterers get longer prison sentences than the batterers who murder them. Some woman who says, 'No more!' goes to prison longer than the man who gets into a rage and batters her to death. That says so much about our society and where we are with women. We have to change that attitude."

On the whole, however, Diana is optimistic about the future. "We are fostering better working relationships between the prosecutors and this unit. We are all recognizing what we need to do. And when we finally get it together and establish the same protocol, and the same type of prosecution boy, is that going to put out a loud message.

"We'll be saying that if you're involved in a domestic violence incident, you're going to be arrested and prosecuted. It won't be tolerated whether you're a white collar mister nice guy CEO, or someone who has grown up believing that it's all right to beat your wife because 'women need to be put in their place.' Now they'll see John or Fred going off to jail. They'll see that it's not acceptable, that it is a big deal here. We will come for you. So I think we're making a difference."

"Alan"
Police Lieutenant

"This is about power and control," says Alan, a 14-year veteran of the police force. "'Why does she stay?' is the question usually asked, not 'Why does he beat her?'"

Since Alan became involved in domestic violence issues, his perceptions of the problem have changed. He has attended courses, met with others in the system, and spoken with staff and victims at shelters.

"I never realized the scope of the problem until recently," he says. "We have 68,000 domestic violence calls a year. That makes it our number one emergency call for police services."

In a typical situation, as Alan describes it, a family fight occurs and then it turns violent. The woman finally calls the police, but when they respond, the situation is confused. He says he'll get even with her for calling the police. She says she's sorry and won't press charges. The police often leave without taking action, thinking: "If she doesn't care to do something, why should I?"

This scenario must change, Alan says. "We need to look at the system as a whole. We need to work toward victimless prosecution. Our purpose should be to get the batterer into a behavior modification program. Ninety percent of them end up in anger management programs, but these programs don't teach people about power."

Alan repeats an alarming statistic he discovered at a Family Violence Conference sponsored by the National College of District Attorneys: "Children from violent families are 1000 times more likely to become batterers themselves."

That conference produced a profound impact on Alan's thinking. He would like to see all police officers attend the same conference "as an investment in our future." With every officer using the training and information he has received, Alan says, homicide rates would be reduced significantly over a five-year period. But training in communication and problem solving, he emphasizes, would have to reach into the community as well.

"The government is short-sighted," Alan says. "It has a tendency to want immediate results. But for this type of solution, effects would be years down the road. We will need longitudinal studies, manpower, to make it work. We also need to convince our superiors [on the police force] that this training is important enough to fund more. We need cameras and film to take photos of a domestic violence scene. We need 911 tapes to be saved as evidence at hearings and trials. Grass roots action alone will not work. We need the top."

The police department, Alan believes, should be a leader in dealing with domestic violence. He concedes that the process for collecting information is slow, and that slowness affects response time, but he says the police department must identify its top priorities and find a way to perform those priorities "right and well."

"Police officers should go to work understanding that they are bringing domestic violence out of the closet," Alan says. "They must stigmatize the batterer. They must send the message that domestic violence is a crime."

Alan believes domestic violence is a fixable problem. "Communication among all parts of the system is needed. Cooperation of everyone in counseling, law enforcement, prosecutors at the line level, and probation is important. We need the courts on board. We need 52-week battery treatment programs enforced by the courts. We also need to improve the number of services available to batterers and victims because people don't know where to go. And we need to get media support, media campaigns, and attention.

We need to get the message to future jurors that there is zero tolerance for domestic violence."

Education at all levels is critical, says Alan. "There is a need at the courts to educate judges. We need four to six hours with mayors and police chiefs, not short meetings."

He would like the Phoenix Police Department and City of Phoenix to consider implementing a five-hour program that is already in place in Framingham, Massachusetts. This program offers fifth and sixth grade students a curriculum designed to eliminate stereotyping, develop self esteem, and teach conflict resolution.

Alan also believes that record keeping needs to be re-examined and modified to ensure the highest level of protection. In some cases, he says, unrestricted access to records containing the names and addresses of victims and witnesses has endangered these people.

"Domestic violence is a complex issue," sums up Alan. "We need follow-up programs. We need a central, nationwide method for communicating on domestic violence. We need safety plans. We need funding and resources."

The bottom line? "We need to change behaviors."

Dennis Garrett

Chief of Police

Phoenix Police Department

Police work runs in Dennis Garrett's blood. "My grandfather on my father's side was a county sheriff and a judge," he says. "There's always been that link in our family. Ever since I was a young boy, I knew I wanted to be in police work of some sort."

Police work is what Dennis Garrett, a Phoenix native, has done for the last 33 years. Starting as a patrol officer with Phoenix Police, he worked his way up through the ranks to reach the top job of police chief. From this unique vantage, Chief Garrett can recall how domestic violence calls were handled back when he was a patrol officer in the 1960s, compared to how they are handled today.

"Back in those days, we called domestic violence incidents 'family fights.' That's what the radio dispatcher put out. And the thinking at the time was that unless somebody was seriously injured, all we would do is separate the combatants and get them to calm down. Usually we would try to talk the more vocal, violent one into leaving the premises for the

night. And that was pretty much the way we were trained. There was not much thought about how it was maybe the fifth or sixth time in a month that we'd been called to that house. Now that's all changing," says Garrett. "It's a much needed change," he adds.

He describes Phoenix Police Department's move toward a more coordinated approach to domestic violence. "We're trying to put the system together to break this continual cycle of domestic violence. The police are an integral part of that system, but so are the social service agencies, the prosecutors, the courts, and corrections. Our major focus is to try to use the parts of the system law enforcement, the courts, and corrections as a hammer to get people into some sort of treatment."

Treatment, according to Garrett, is the only real long-term solution. "It means getting inside the offenders' heads and getting them to change their behavior. If that doesn't happen, they will continue doing the same thing. And it will pass on from parent to child. The children will see it as the way to handle difficult situations in a violent type of way."

But the police department, alone, cannot deal with this problem, says Garrett.

"Something significant has to take place for offenders. That old bell has to go off so he says, 'Hey! This is not what I should be doing.' Other parts of the system are in a better position than the police to help make that bell go off."

From the police department's point of view, says Garrett, a reduction in domestic violence offenses would go a long way toward improving other police services.

"Domestic violence is one of the types of calls that we get the most. If we could do something over the long haul to cut that figure in half just in half we'd be doing a tremendous amount for the police department in terms of our ability to answer other types of calls for service.

"But a much bigger issue than that," he says, "has to do with domestic violence itself. What it does to our society and our community is devastating. We have homicides in these things. We've got people who are injured or crippled for life, both physically and psychologically."

Changing the system, however, is not an easy task, he says. "It's akin to turning

a battleship around at sea. It takes a long time, maybe 60 miles to get that battleship moving in a different direction. Same goes here because we have so many groups that are advocates for different things. If you want to change something, these groups come into play. And so do the media. They may not create news, but they can certainly direct it."

Chief Garrett believes the Domestic Violence Unit of the Phoenix Police Department is playing a "critically important" role in improving the way domestic violence cases are handled. But domestic violence is not a crime where you can simply "get tough" as you might with, say, gang violence. "With some additional personnel," says Garrett, "we were able to create more gang squads and slow that problem down a little bit. To do that with domestic violence is more difficult."

Why? "Gangs have a tendency to brag," says Garrett. "They're not shy about what they do. But domestic violence is much more secretive. It takes place behind people's doors. Only when it's outrageous does it happen in public. So it's much more difficult for us to put together a strategy like creating an additional group of officers to go out and 'prevent' domestic violence.

It almost has to happen once before you can act. Then you can work to prevent domestic violence from happening again."

In terms of prevention, domestic violence is much like homicide, says Garrett. "We cannot design strategies to prevent homicides. There's really very little the police can do to anticipate them. But there's a lot we can do after they happen. And I think that's where we're trying to get with domestic violence. We're trying to say, 'Hey! We need to do a better job once it's discovered to prevent it from happening again.' And it's not just the police. I'm talking about this whole system."

While domestic violence is a high priority for the Phoenix Police Department, Chief Garrett admits that competition for resources is fierce. "The police department needs more equipment for gathering the evidence to prosecute. We need more personnel to put on the problem. And prosecutors need more staff to lower the threshold of these cases so that some offenders don't skate because caseloads are so high. And service agencies that provide treatment need more people, too. Everybody needs more resources to make this thing really work. So that's a real concern. But we have a lot

of other problems in a city this size, and they all have their advocates who want us to put resources in their area."

What is required almost as much as additional resources, adds Garrett, is simply the time to get a workable strategy in place. "We need patience to allow us to make the changes. We need patience to work around the problems that come up." And the police must also have the cooperation of all parties, including the media and the many competing advocacy groups.

"We need the desire to work together and not fight each other over the different segments of the system," Garrett says. "Let's work together to solve this problem."

Lessons Learned

The voices heard in *Hitting Home* are loud and clear, yet they do not tell the whole story of domestic violence. In truth, they cannot, for there are too many voices remaining to be heard. Nevertheless, when read in their entirety—and supplemented by the interviews not presented in this book—they do provide an insight into the complex series of relationships that comprise the domestic violence system.

Some of the relationships—such as those between victims and perpetrators—are clearly dysfunctional. Others—such as those between the police and prosecutors—are sometimes strained.

And what is apparent is that all relationships get tested in the course of navigating through the domestic violence system.

What can be learned from standing back and dispassionately evaluating these relationships?

The sheer number of domestic violence "calls for service" puts

extraordinary pressure on all parts of the system.

It often begins with telephone calls to police or 911 operators—reports of domestic violence are the most frequent request for police assistance in Phoenix. Patrol officers spend as much as 100,000 hours per year on these calls, averaging over 1^{1/2} hours per call. This is a serious strain on resources. It is time not spent handling other calls for service such as burglaries, assaults, and homicides.

After each call, a patrol officer must fill out a report. Each report must then be reviewed by a detective to determine whether sufficient evidence exists to pursue filing the case with a city or county prosecutor. Frequently, additional investigation is required. Each case is then reviewed by an attorney to determine whether or not there is sufficient evidence to successfully prosecute—with or without the victim's testimony.

At this stage, "legal triage" seems to take place. Only the most serious cases

backed up by significant evidence warrant prosecution as a felony; other cases are reduced to misdemeanors. Prosecutors assigned to handle the misdemeanors, consequently, find themselves overwhelmed, and some cases slip through the cracks. The perpetrator gets only "a slap on the hand;" the victim gets angry.

Services for victims are spread exceedingly thin. Not enough shelters or beds exist to accommodate the women who need this alternative to escape an abusive home. Not enough counselors are available to provide them with the education and support they often need in order to turn their lives around. Not enough court advocates are in place to help them understand the legal system into which they are entering.

Offenders services are of questionable efficacy. The usual treatment is a 12-week program of mandatory group/individual counseling. It may help some individual perpetrators, but may not be enough to counteract a lifetime of learned behavior. And many offenders receive no counseling at all.

With all parts of the system bursting from sheer overload, there is a widely recognized need for additional human and financial resources—more officers, more detectives, more training, more attorneys, more shelters, more beds, and more counselors for victims, offenders, and their children. These resources are all perceived as part of the solution for "fixing" the system.

And yet, while more resources might alleviate the strain on the system, resources alone do not address what many believe to be the heart of the matter:

Domestic violence is unlikely to diminish until it is recognized and treated as a societal problem—not just an individual problem.

As interviewees repeated over and over, domestic violence is about people cruelly exercising power and control over others—whether verbally, emotionally, or physically. It is not just about individually unacceptable behavior; it is

about socially unacceptable behavior.

Unfortunately, a common public perception appears to be that domestic violence is a personal business.

Bringing it out into the open is inappropriately "airing dirty laundry." Even battered victims usually won't go to the police unless the abuse becomes noticeably violent or it happens in public.

Virtually everyone interviewed agreed that the incidence of domestic violence must be reduced. They further agreed that the key is zero tolerance for abusive behavior. Attempts to strengthen prosecution—for example, through "victimless prosecution" where the state proceeds without the testimony of a victim—represent one effort along this path. Many believe that a strong stance towards prosecution will deter potential offenders.

But even more important, perhaps, than the need to prosecute violent behaviors is the need to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. To accomplish this:

Public awareness of domestic violence must increase, and a public outcry must be heard.

Many of those interviewed believe that the system will not change easily from within. They suggested that the catalyst must be public outrage. In other words, until domestic violence is perceived as a crime—much as gang violence, rape, and drunken driving have come to be perceived—dramatic results may be slow in coming. Education for everyone, including the public-at-large, is considered the first and foremost solution to the problem.

Above all, interviewees across the spectrum emphasized the need to educate children. Arizona statistics indicate that children are present in approximately one quarter of all domestic violence cases. If violent behavior is truly learned at home, one way to stop the continuation of violence is to teach children that it is unacceptable.

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Phoenix Police Department

The mission of the Phoenix Police Department is to provide community-oriented enforcement designed to protect life and property, and maintain order, while assuring fair and equal treatment for all.



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