

Mecklenburg County Women's Commission

Annual Report

December 2002

The mission of the Mecklenburg County Women's Commission is to seek to promote the growth, well-being, self-sufficiency, and productivity of women, children and families through individual and group guidance, counseling, intervention, and educational, informational, and vocational services.

The goals and objectives of the Women's Commission include assistance to individuals in their job search by identifying support networks and other resources for self-sufficiency, as well as to provide prevention and intervention programs and services to victims, offenders and child witnesses of domestic violence. This is accomplished through individual and group counseling, parenting groups, case management, crisis intervention, advocacy, legal referral assistance, and community education.



Pat Grigg, Director

"We are immensely grateful for the continuing support of County Management, the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners and the general public."

Domestic Violence Umbrella General



The Domestic Violence Umbrella Division was created in October 2000. This new division serves domestic violence victims, child witnesses, batterers as well as the general public of Mecklenburg County and is housed within the Women's Commission. This reorganization helps improve the access and quality of services provided and creates a more user-friendly system. In addition, the collaboration among domestic violence service providers will reduce duplication and fragmentation of services and decrease the overlapping of domestic violence services will decrease in Mecklenburg County.

Mecklenburg County will now have a greater capacity to efficiently collect and assemble reliable, valid and consistent domestic violence information through the Domestic Violence Information & Tracking System (DVITS) This system was developed with a State grant of \$192,000 to create a secure system and single database that allows Mecklenburg County and its departments to share data through the Intranet. DVITS went live in August 2001.

Adult Services

Since 1999, the Adult Domestic Violence & Women In Crisis Program has increased its outreach to victims of domestic violence and others in crisis as demonstrated in its increased number of clients served. The program served 1,492 clients in 1999 compared to the 2,985 clients served in 2002.

We have a strong partnership with the Domestic Violence Advocacy Council (DVAC) who in 2002 initiated Memorial Marches for murdered victims of domestic violence. New partnerships were formed with the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg League of Women Voters, along with the DVAC, in the implementation of a court observation project. A partnership was also formed with the Department of Social Services to provide domestic violence services to TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) now known as WorkFirst, to victims and children of domestic violence. This on-site program served 92 clients its first year and has now evolved to a 2002 population of 466 clients.

The domestic violence staff continues to provide information and education to departments and agencies in Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte.



Child Observers Program & Teen Dating Violence Services



Since 1999, the Domestic Violence Child Observers "HERO" Program and Teen Dating Violence Programs has served more than 1,100 children each year. This program has a revised curriculum and has expanded from eight (8) sessions to twelve (12) sessions in 2002. A Tuesday afternoon on-site group was also added for the Teen Dating Violence Program.

The Victim Services Unit expanded weekly Domestic Violence Group Services to three nights per week (four groups per week). In addition, Summer Day Groups began in the summer of 2001 (two groups) and expanded to three groups in the summer of 2002. The Healthy Development Program was created in July of 2001 to serve two to four year old child observers of domestic violence through contractual play therapy services. Unfortunately, that program lost funding in June 2002. We are continuing our search for funding to re-establish this program.

Programa Confianza

Programa Confianza offers culturally sensitive community based services to battered Latinas by providing individual counseling and domestic violence educational services with crisis counseling and intervention, client advocacy, and information and referrals to other agencies in the community.

With one social worker, this program served 54 clients in 1999 with 107 client contacts. In 2002, the program served 301 clients with 569 client contacts. We are currently seeking additional funding for this rapidly expanding program.



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NOVA



NOVA has enhanced its reputation as having cutting-edge, nationally recognized programming and services. Since 1999, the program length has increased from 26 sessions to the current 32, putting into place a Phase II (Aftercare) program. NOVA has added specialized groups catering to Spanish speaking clients, women's groups, and young adult groups.

In 1999, NOVA assessed 660 clients admitting 552 of those. In 2002, there were 708 clients assessed with 663 admitted. The weekly average number of attendees in this time period was 463 clients.

Professional Legal Assistance

Women who need information and referral services regarding family law matters (separation, divorce, child custody, child support, equitable distribution, domestic violence, etc.) are eligible to attend our FREE legal clinic offered the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. The Legal Clinic served 143 participants in 1999 while serving 162 participants in 2002.

Two volunteers with legal training volunteer their time and services Monday through Thursday on-site each week offering referrals and legal information.



Employment & Training Unit

New Choices



The New Choices program is a seminar series covering topics such as: self-esteem, goal setting/time management, career exploration, job search, resume writing, image, financial management, and introduction to the Internet. The program also provides individual employment counseling/coaching, case management, community referrals, and placement assistance. A new computer tutorial component was added in 2000, which is used with clients to enhance their knowledge of Windows, Microsoft Office, and keyboarding.

The primary goal of this program is the promotion of self-sufficiency. This program served 141 displaced homemakers in 1999 and grew 65 percent to serving 233 clients in 2002. The North Carolina Council for Women/Domestic Violence Commission funds the New Choices program.

Internet Job Bank & Clothing Closet

The Job Bank is an Employment Resource Center for victims of domestic violence, batterer's participating in NOVA, and women in crisis served by the Women's Commission. The Internet Job Bank service is available to the general public as an online database comprised of local openings that employers have sent to the Women's Commission, as well as links to many other openings making our site extremely valuable as a job search tool. Other community agencies now use this site on a regular basis to help meet their customer needs. The number of hits on this website has grown from 6,048 hits in 1999 to 32,651 hits in 2002.

The number of walk-in Job Bank clients has grown 426% over the same period of time. The number of walk-ins in 1999 was 675, while 3,223 clients came into the program in 2002.

The Clothing Closet has more than tripled the number of visitors since 1999. There were 201 client visits in 1999 and 713 visits in 2002. We partner with many local businesses and organizations to provide new and used clothing to women seeking to enter the workplace for the first time and who have minimal resources for purchasing appropriate attire. Especially supportive have been the Daughters of Penelope, the Huntersville Women's Club, Vanguard, Friendship Baptist Church, and sororities.

This unit of the Women's Commission updates, develops, publishes and distributes the Blueprint Directory of local women's organizations, as well as, assists the Director with projects of the Women's Commission Advisory Board.



Community Outreach

The Mecklenburg County Women's Commission department is served by the Women's Commission Advisory Board (WCAB) and the Domestic Violence Advisory Board (DVAB). The WCAB works toward identifying women's issues in the workplace and in the home, while the DVAB's focus helps to identify how domestic violence impacts Charlotte-Mecklenburg. We continue to participate and serve on the Domestic Violence Advocacy Council (DVAC), which is comprised of public and private agencies and interested individuals working issues of domestic violence.

The Mecklenburg County Women's Commission is involved in numerous community outreach projects throughout the year. Some of the projects that we are involved with are: Women's History Month (March), The President's Network Luncheon (May), Women's Equality Day (August), and Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October). We host the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Women's Agenda Assembly every other year as well. We hosted the National Association of Commissions for Women's 2002 Convention at the Ballantyne Resort, which involved a wide range of workshops dealing with women's issues from Leadership & Professional Development to Domestic Violence and Child Custody.

The HERO Holiday Celebration, held every December for the past eight years, for child observers of domestic violence, continues its ongoing partnership with many local and area-wide companies.

