

Georgia Department of Human Resources

VIOLENCE AGAINST ADULTS IN GEORGIA

Preventing rape, abuse and domestic violence and helping victims recover

The Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) works to help all Georgians achieve a safe, healthy and self-reliant life. Unfortunately, many Georgians are victims of sexual assault, battering and other forms of violence, often perpetrated by members of their household and caregivers. DHR, through its divisions of Family and Children Services (DFCS); Public Health (PH); Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD); and Aging Services (DAS), operates a statewide system to prevent violence against adults and help the victims return to health and self-sufficiency.*

THE PROBLEM

- Georgians made 72,682 calls to domestic violence crisis lines in 2002.
- Georgia's certified family violence programs provided shelter for 3,932 adults and 3,920 children in 2002.
- The Georgia Bureau of Investigation reports that law enforcement officers responded to 47,802 family violence incidents in 2001.
- 2,044 rapes were reported to Georgia law enforcement agencies in 2001.
- 2,020 victims of sexual assault or attempted assault were served by Georgia's state-funded sexual assault programs during 2002.
- One in six Georgia women ages 15-44 has been forced to have sexual intercourse against her will at least once during her lifetime, according to DHR's 1995 Georgia Women's Health Survey.
- Adult Protective Services, part of DHR's Division of Family and Children Services, helps approximately 5,000 victims of violence, neglect, exploitation or self-neglect each month, including people age 65 and older and people with disabilities who are age 18 and older. (Data collection is being upgraded to separate types of abuse and number of individuals served each year.)
- The Long-Term Care Ombudsman responded to 479 complaints of abuse, neglect and exploitation on behalf of residents of personal care homes and nursing homes during 2002. The Office of Regulatory Services' Long Term Care unit investigated 452 complaints of abuse, neglect or exploitation of residents of personal care homes and nursing homes in 2002. 217 (48 percent) of these investigations found violations of regulatory requirements (although some violations were unrelated to the initial allegation).

HOW DHR HELPS

- The DHR Violence Services Team, representing all department programs that provide violence prevention and services to victims, works to better coordinate and strengthen these services. As a result, staff training in all aspects of violence against adults is taking place across division and program lines, and all agencies screen consumers for all types of violence in order to refer them to services as needed.

* DFCS also operates Child Protective Services, which prevents child abuse and neglect and helps child victims.

- DFCS administers nearly \$9 million yearly in state and federal funds to support 43 family violence shelters. A 24-hour crisis line connects callers with the shelter nearest them.
- Adult Protective Services staff in county DFCS offices investigate reports of abuse or neglect of people aged 65 and older and adults with disabilities aged 18 or older, and provide services to protect the victims.
- DFCS participates in local task forces set up in each judicial circuit by the Governor's Commission on Family Violence.
- Applicants for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families who are found to be victims of domestic violence may be exempt from some work requirements.
- MHDDAD serves a population especially vulnerable to family violence and sexual assault, including violence associated with addictive diseases. Treatment services address many mental disorders that are caused or made worse by family violence and sexual assault.
- MHDDAD's Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program works with school systems and parents to prevent violence in and around schools.
- DAS provides information and assistance, community education and professional education about elder abuse, through twelve Area Agencies on Aging and their subcontractors. In FY 2002 the Elder Abuse Prevention program held 386 community education sessions and 222 professional education sessions and handled about 500 calls for information and referral.
- The new Senior Adult Victims Advocate program gives support, mentoring and consultation to adults aged 60 and over who are victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation, and serves as a liaison between victims, social services agencies and the court system. The budget is \$184,000, of which \$84,000 is state and \$100,000 is federal funds.
- The Long-term Care Ombudsman program advocates for people in institutions who may be victims of violence, with a budget of \$2.2 million, of which \$1.09 million is state and \$1.11 million is federal funds.
- PH's Violence Against Women (VAW) program administers approximately \$1.5 million, including \$1.2 million in federal funds and \$298,191 in state funds (FY 2003), primarily in contracts with 21 rape crisis centers to provide prevention education and crisis services, and also contracts with three PH districts for prevention services. VAW trains law enforcement and medical staff to recognize victims of sexual harassment, and has worked with the rape crisis centers to develop a public awareness campaign to prevent rape.
- PH's Injury Prevention program, in collaboration with VAW, is conducting a needs assessment and developing a strategic plan for prevention, intervention and victim services addressing violence against women.
- All women's public health services include violence prevention and referrals, including perinatal and family planning, men's health, youth development, and services for pregnant women and families of newborns.