



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

To: Human Services Committee

From: Erika Tindill, Executive Director
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: March 14, 2011

Re: Raised Bill 6588: AAC Domestic Violence and Child Trauma

Good afternoon, Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Erika Tindill. I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about Raised Bill 6588: An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Child Trauma. There are several components to this bill that I will address.

CCADV and its member programs providing direct services understand that victims of domestic violence and their children are traumatized by their experiences. We support the concept that social service organizations throughout Connecticut should use a trauma-informed approach when advocating for and counseling clients.

In Sections One and Two of this bill, we believe the intent is to ensure that those individuals seeking help for domestic violence are supported by community-based services and counselors that utilize trauma-informed principles. Yet, the bill details practices that would place an undue burden on both law enforcement and the Family Violence Intervention Unit of each court. In

Section One of this bill, law enforcement would be required to provide the victim with information concerning licensed professional counselors who are trained in providing trauma-informed care. In Section Two, there are recommendations that the Family Violence Intervention Unit of each court “make available appropriate services that include, but are not limited to, the provision of trauma-informed care by a licensed professional counselor.” For purposes of these subsections, "trauma-informed care" means services directed by a thorough understanding of the neurological, biological, psychological and social effects of trauma and violence on an individual. After speaking with the proponent of this bill, Dr. Alice Forrester of the Clifford Beers Clinic, we would like to present a solution that does not require a change to the laws that presently exist.

We propose that the additions to both Sections One and Two be eliminated and that CCADV and each of its member programs maintain a listing of appropriate resources, for victims, which includes trauma informed services. Dr. Forrester has agreed to provide CCADV with a listing of agencies and counselors throughout Connecticut that can be distributed to the membership and made available to victims, law enforcement and the Family Violence Intervention Unit.

Each member program is required to be in compliance with CCADV's Program Standards for Member Programs, which is the set of standards that 1) define the requirements for providing domestic violence services in Connecticut and 2) are the monitoring tool used by our funders, the Office of Victim Services and the Department of Social Services. Through these standards, each domestic violence program is required to 1) provide trauma-informed services, 2) to maintain relationships with area providers including counseling services for both adults and children, and 3) to have a listing of local resources for those advocates answering the hotline.

Instead of placing additional burden on law enforcement and the Family Violence Intervention Units to create and maintain a listing of trauma sensitive counselors, CCADV member programs can provide victims with the appropriate resources. There is value in using our network to fulfill the intent of this section.

In response to Section Three of this bill, CCADV wholeheartedly supports the addition of "dating violence between students" on the list of bullying behaviors. According to the Department of Public Health, 10 percent of teens surveyed were in a physically violent dating relationship last year and 17 percent were in an emotionally abusive dating relationship. Of those who reported physical or emotional abuse, 30 percent considered suicide, 25 percent made a suicide plan, and 20 percent attempted suicide. Since we know that teen dating violence occurs in schools, the language in this bill will help to provide practical solutions to a very dangerous and complicated situation.

In response to Section Four, CCADV supports the training of the Department of Children and Families staff. Our Coalition is happy to work with DCF to make this come to fruition.

Lastly, I would like to thank the members of the Committee for their on-going funding support of domestic violence services in Connecticut

Thank you.

