



NNEDV

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNTS

The National Census of Domestic Violence Services

Explanation of Methods

In an effort to safely and non-invasively collect an unduplicated count, the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) administered the National Census of Domestic Violence Services (NCDVS) from November 2, 2006 until November 3, 2006. The NCDVS uses a snapshot approach to count the total number of people served in domestic violence programs around the country during a single 24 hour period.

What is a "Snapshot" Count?

A snapshot count provides an unduplicated head count of the people using services in a single 24-hour period, without providing identifying information about any individual survivor. This method provides an unduplicated count across states and across the nation, operating on the assumption that no one will use the services of more than one local domestic violence program in a single 24-hour period. This assumption is quite reasonable, because it is impossible for one person to be sheltered in two programs at the same time, and, given travel times and scheduling complications, it is rare that a survivor will travel from one program to another in the same day.

"The complexity of the issues is very diverse -- the lives we touch on a daily basis. How does one capture the joy of a woman finding a job? How does one capture in one day the numerous systems we interact with, to advocate, to seek change? And how we do that today is different than how it will look tomorrow."

-An urban program in the North Central Region

Why do we need a "Snapshot" Count?

A "snapshot" count provides a safe alternative to the use of victim-identified data collection methods. Such methods can be extremely risky for survivors of domestic violence and any person perceived to be abetting their flight as well as methodologically inappropriate, and arguably illegal. Other methods to determine service usage such as phone surveys may place survivors at risk by inquiring about abuse when an abuser is present. Such phone surveys may also systematically undercount service usage and incidence because many individuals do not feel safe or comfortable enough to respond honestly.

What are the advantages of a "Snapshot" Count over other methods?

In general, domestic violence is highly dangerous for its victims, especially when the victim is leaving her or his abuser. Knowing this, victims often take a great deal of care to avoid detection by their abuser including moving, changing names, and other behaviors that make tracking difficult at best and impossible at worst.

Data collection efforts that track victims may make victims less willing to use the services of local domestic violence programs for fear that their names or more generally identifying information can be used by abusers to track them.

Confidentiality laws in several states as well as the recent reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (2006) establish a legal right for victims to have confidential information that is not shared in other databases.