

CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Research on Violence Against Women at the University of Kentucky as a joint project of the University and the Patton Administration. As an academic area of study, the crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and their attendant risks present complex challenges. These cannot be completely addressed without a cross-discipline, content-specific approach which integrates practice, theory and research. The Center for Research on Violence Against Women is designed to afford such an opportunity.

The Center will provide an infrastructure to promote a vigorous research agenda and to ensure the integration of research, instruction and the service mission of the University. The Center is designed to foster cross discipline approaches and collaboration between the academic setting and practitioners in the violence against women field. The Center will facilitate access to extramural funding for University faculty to conduct research, help create a nationally recognized research agenda, and convene an annual research conference to highlight the Center's efforts and expose faculty, students and practitioners to state of the art work being done in the area.

The Center for Research on Violence Against Women will include research focus in three areas of concentration: Clinical (health and mental health), Law Education, and Public Policy and Administration. The Center may look to future development of a graduate certificate which, if approved by the University Senate, would offer coursework specifically designed to address risk-related behavior, mental and physical health sequelae, and the legal implications of domestic violence, rape, stalking and similar crimes. Additionally, coursework to prepare practitioners to engage in public policy making and the administration of victim-serving agencies would be offered in any future certificate program.

The Center for Research on Violence Against Women furthers the mission of the University of Kentucky to enhance its stature as one of the nation's great universities by establishing a national research agenda; by developing innovative approaches to the instruction of graduate and undergraduate students; and by

promoting the excellence and national reputation of the faculty of the University of Kentucky. Addressing violence against women fits well into the University's priority of promoting scholarship and research in the risk-related behavioral sciences.

Finally, the Center for Research on Violence Against Women furthers the mission of the Patton Administration to address the welfare of women victimized by violence and to enhance the stature of postsecondary education across the Commonwealth.

CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY CONCERN

The University of Kentucky has undertaken to enhance its stature as one of the nation's great universities: recognized nationally and internationally for excellence in teaching, research and public service. The establishment of a Center for Research on Violence Against Women is a unique opportunity to enhance the mission of the University while improving the status of women in the Commonwealth.

The Center for Research on Violence Against Women affords excellent opportunities:

- ☐ Opportunity to promote cross discipline learning and a synthesis of the knowledge related to violence against women to maximize the strengths of each field;
- ☐ Opportunity to promote the excellence and national reputation of the faculty of the University of Kentucky;
- ☐ Opportunity to access extra-mural funding for research on risk management and risk-related behavior to further the University's mission in this area of behavioral and social science inquiry;
- ☐ Avenue to participate in formulating a nationally recognized research agenda which expands the knowledge base of the field of violence against women and advances immediate application of the knowledge base to instruction and practical application;
- ☐ Means to attract top faculty by providing an environment for outstanding professional education, mentoring and growth opportunity;

Mission Statement:

The Center for Research on Violence Against Women at the University of Kentucky is committed to preparing students and advancing scientific inquiry into the legal and clinical complexities presented by domestic violence, rape, stalking and related crimes against women, and is dedicated to enhancing the welfare and safety of those impacted by the crime through research, scholarship and public service.

- ☐ Opportunity to promote the integration of research, instruction and public service in a field vital to the fundamental welfare of Kentuckians; and
- ☐ A unique ability to address a significant barrier to learning for women across the Commonwealth: Those who suffer from current or historical violence cannot reach their fullest potential in the academic setting.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A RESEARCH CONCERN

“After reviewing the literature on battering, rape and sexual assault the Panel (on Research on Violence Against Women) concludes that significant gaps exist in understanding the extent and causes of violence against women and the impact and effectiveness of preventive and treatment interventions. In order to begin filling those gaps, the panel recommends a research agenda to facilitate development in four major areas: preventing violence against women, improving research methods, building knowledge about violence against women, and developing the research infrastructure.”

(Crowell & Burgess, 1996)

As an area of scientific inquiry, research in the field of violence against women is relatively young. Even the broad concept of “intimate partner violence” is one which has gelled only in recent years, previously research has built empirical knowledge bases around distinct, singular forms of abuse patterns, such as femicide, rape or physical battering. Further, studies into these forms of abuse have been conducted separately from criminal justice research and research on violence in general.

The violence against women field is also challenged by the fact that in and of itself, an identified field for research in this area does not exist: studies on rape, battering, stalking and the like have been conducted out of criminal justice programs, nursing, mental health, sociology, law, and varied other disciplines. While a multidisciplinary approach might offer strengths to the study of a problem of the complexity of violence against women, in this case the difficulty is that each discipline brings with it different theoretical models, instrumentation, operational definitions and other practices which hamper the ability to generalize findings across studies.

The problem of definitions in the violence against women arena has posed a particular challenge. No consensus has been established around a consistent operational definition for intimate violence. Some definitions include only intentional conduct, others include conduct perceived to be intentional by the victim; some include harassment and psychological harm, others do not. These research definitions also vary dramatically from those encountered in the law which can further complicate research aimed at understanding intimate criminal conduct and its impact on the criminal justice system. Finally, in addition to ongoing debate regarding the breadth of the definition of intimate violence, operational definitions for the abusive behaviors which make up the overall concept are also lacking (i.e.: physical abuse, sexual coercion).

Further research is needed in the clinical domain (e.g.: mental health sequelae associated with victimization; offender profiling, the efficacy of offender treatment by type of offender; suicidality and homicidality; the efficacy of risk management and lethality assessment; the health aspects of violence against women; the role of substance abuse), both in distinct areas of research and through a synthesis of research areas (e.g.: substance abuse and risk of revictimization; the overlap of violence against women and child maltreatment). A significant need for outcome research will benefit the public policy domain, as will research on the role of professionals in violence against women cases and the attendant impact of work in this area of mental health and criminal justice. In the legal arena, further examination of the criminal justice system and the application of criminal justice policy and law in violence against women cases are needed (e.g.: efficacy of relatively new laws such as stalking; use of syndrome evidence; relationship of court involvement and level of risk; unique aspects of cases in which victims kill offenders).

While these problems challenge research initiatives, extraordinary opportunities exist if research is promoted and integrated into theory, instruction and practice.

THE DESIGN OF A CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Leadership: The Center for Research on Violence Against Women will be administered under the Office of the Vice President for Research in close collaboration with the Office of the Provost.

Staffing: Beginning in the fall of 2002, the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Services from the Office of Governor Paul Patton will assume an acting director capacity for the Center on a part-time basis. Additionally, funds have been committed by Governor Patton to support administrative services, operating costs and research fellowships. Beginning in December 2003, a full-time director for the Center will be recruited and hired by the University. Additionally, funds will be raised to support an endowed chair. An appointment of a faculty/researcher to the endowed chair will create a Research Director for the Center.

Facility and Equipment Requirements: The University, on an interim basis, will make minimal office space available for the first 15 months. Equipment needs are limited to routine computer and duplication equipment which will be funded by the state general funds made available to the Center in the first year.


Faculty: The stature and uniqueness of the Center for Research on Violence Against Women will position the University to attract visiting faculty from among the top researchers, legal and clinical faculty in the country. For research partnerships, affiliated faculty may be drawn from the Department of Psychiatry, the Department of Psychology, the College of Social Work, the Medical Center,

Legal ⇔ Clinical ⇔ Research

The risk of homicide in the home by a family member or intimate for both women and men is 7.8% times greater if a gun is kept in the home (Kellerman & Mercy, 1992). This type of data led lawmakers to enact legislation prohibiting persons with protective orders placed against them because of domestic violence to be prohibited from purchasing a firearm (Violence Against Women Act, 1994). In recent years, however, advocates and clinical staff have begun to share anecdotal reports that judges are less likely to issue an order of protection at the request of a victim because of the knowledge that the domestic violence offender will then be unable to purchase or possess a firearm. Research is needed to determine if the legal and public policy effort to increase protection has, in practice, acted to actually reduce the safety of women.

the Center on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research, the Martin School of Public Administration and the Law School, and other programs, giving faculty increased national and international exposure. Cross-disciplinary initiatives will be encouraged.

Advisory Committee: In order to establish linkages and support from criminal justice and victim advocacy agencies in Kentucky and around the nation, the Center will establish a multidisciplinary Advisory Committee. The Committee will offer recommendations regarding the Center's research initiatives, promote academic/practitioner partnerships, and will assist the Center in accessing need state and national support. The Advisory Committee will be made up of three sub-groups: UK faculty, practitioners in the field, and five researchers from around the country whose work in the violence against women area is well known and highly respected.

Non-Profit Public Administration 
Mental Health

Directors of victim serving agencies face unique challenges associated with the human resource management, particularly including the impact on staff of being routinely exposed to the trauma stories of agency clients. Mental health professionals can provide directors with insight into and management of what has been called vicarious traumatization. Research is needed to identify mitigators of this work by-product.

Research: Research initiatives will provide graduate students and faculty the opportunity to engage in state of the art research on topics related to criminal justice, the risk-related behavioral sciences, and the mental health and health aspects of violence against women. Research will also attend to systemic evaluation of programs in the health, mental health and criminal justice areas designed to address violence against women. Affiliated research faculty will be engaged in establishing a research agenda for the Center.

Funding for Research: The Center will facilitate access to extramural funding (national and state) for faculty conducting violence against women-related research. Additionally, the Center will offer small research fellowships to faculty and graduate students to initiate pilot research studies on risk and violence against women-related projects, or to supplement existing research by adding components on victimization or risk-related inquiry. The interdisciplinary nature of the Center will allow access to numerous federal grant sources such as CDC, NIH, NIMH, NIJ, DOJ, NIDA, and others.

Research Conference: The Center for Research on Violence Against Women will host an annual or biennial National Research Conference on Violence Against Women to highlight the Center's research agenda and to bring together the most cutting edge work being done in the field each year. The conference will not only highlight the Center's research agenda, will promote and increase the visibility of research being conducted by the University of Kentucky, and will expose faculty, students and Kentucky practitioners to state of the art research by bringing together the most cutting edge work being done in the field each year. The increased profile of the Research Center could also attract additional funding to the University. A training center such as what the Center will provide was recommended by the American Psychological Association Task Force on Violence and the Family (1996).

In addition to research conference which will attract researchers and practitioners from around Kentucky and the nation, the Center will be positioned to host think tanks with top researchers and publish related proceedings.

Research Colloquia for Faculty of Kentucky Universities:

University of Kentucky faculty associated with the Center will hold an annual colloquium at which faculty and graduate students from all Kentucky public universities could present research proposals. The Center-affiliated faculty will provide technical assistance with respect to research questions and design and data interpretation. Such colloquia will promote violence against women-related research and will promote a leadership role for the University of Kentucky among other Kentucky universities.

Public Policy ⇨ Research

In these days of budget cuts, programs are increasingly called upon to implement systemic evaluation and outcome measures. Research implementing process and outcome evaluations are needed to ensure the ability of victim serving programs to continue to receive state and federal funding.