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New Study Finds Connecticut Domestic Violence Shelters Highly Effective

Hartford, CT – One hundred percent of domestic violence survivors, residing in one of Connecticut’s eighteen domestic violence shelters, said they got all or some of the help they needed with restraining orders, understanding about domestic violence, safety planning, custody and welfare/TANF. Ninety-four percent of survivors said the staff made them feel welcome, while ninety one percent said the staff treated them with respect. Overall, Connecticut’s domestic violence victims reported remarkably positive outcomes from staying at shelters. These are just some of the findings the groundbreaking new study *Meeting Survivors’ Needs: A Multi-State Study of Domestic Violence Shelter Experiences* released today. **On Monday, March 2, 2008, 1:30 p.m. in Room 310 of the Capitol, the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence will hold a press conference to reveal the results of the survey.**

Meeting Survivors Needs includes quotes from domestic violence survivors including:

“I probably would’ve killed myself or stayed and got beaten to death.”

“When I first got here I felt scared and disoriented. Talking to the staff has helped.”

“It has saved my life. I wanted to die.”

The Connecticut survivors who participated in *Meeting Survivors Needs* are very similar in many ways to survivors from around the country, including most demographics, needs and the overall rating of the help they received during their time in shelter. Nationally, 78 percent of survivors reported that they had children under the age of 18, and 68 percent had minor children with them at the shelter. National data shows that 99 percent of survivors reported they got the help they wanted with their own safety and 95% had assistance with safety planning.

In some aspects, Connecticut differed from nationwide trends. Participating survivors of domestic violence from Connecticut were more likely to be Hispanic than other participating

survivors. Survivors had more positive first impressions of the shelter in several areas and Connecticut's survivors had higher ratings of their outcomes (positive changes and general ratings) for both adults and children. Connecticut survivors were more likely to report a need for housing on entry than survivors in other states.

“This study provides a wealth of information about domestic violence shelters, the services they offer and the people they serve,” said *Meeting Survivors Needs* author Dr. Eleanor Lyon, of the University of Connecticut's Institute for Violence Prevention and Reduction at the School of Social Work. “Domestic violence shelters are vital resources and serve a critical need for those who experience abuse. We now have even more proof that shelters are saving lives.”

“Those of us who work with domestic violence survivors have long known that shelters play a pivotal role in saving the lives of women and children,” said Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence Executive Director Erika M. Tindill, Esquire. “*Meeting Survivors Needs* confirms that shelters are on the right track. Ensuring funding and resources for shelters in Connecticut is more important than ever.”

To eliminate the gap between the demand for and delivery of vital domestic violence services, advocates from Connecticut are urging Congress to reauthorize and fully fund the *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)*. *FVPSA* is the only dedicated federal funding source for domestic violence shelter programs but it expired in September 2008. While *FVPSA* remains unauthorized and critically under funded, victims' ability to flee violent homes and find safety is in jeopardy. For the past two weeks, advocates have been calling on the House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to prioritize their work on *FVPSA* to move forward in the reauthorization process.

This groundbreaking study surveyed shelter residents in Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Washington between October, 2007 and March, 2008. Nationwide, 215 programs in those states participated and 3,410 domestic violence survivors completed surveys. In Connecticut, 119 survivors at 15 shelters participated. Surveys were available in eleven languages and distributed at the time of shelter admission and exit. The survey questions addressed survivors' entry experiences, their needs and the extent to which needs were met, if they encountered any conflicts or problems, changes survivors attributed to shelter stay, and rated the help they received. Participating programs provided information about staff, volunteers, bed capacity and the services provided.

University of Connecticut's Institute for Violence Prevention and Reduction at the School of Social Work, in collaboration with the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, conducted the study. It was funded by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, and administered by the National Institute of Justice.

The full report, *Meeting Survivors' Needs: A Multi-State Study of Domestic Violence Shelter Experiences*, as well as a summary of national findings, are available online at www.vawnet.org.

The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a membership organization whose purpose is to work together to end domestic violence by changing the social conditions, beliefs and social actions that perpetuate abuse against victims of domestic. For more information about the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, visit www.ctcadv.org.

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