

Building Partnerships for Economic Justice: A Report on Innovative Pilot Projects

Thursday, June 25th, 2015
1:30 – 3:00pm EDT



**CENTER FOR SURVIVOR
AGENCY & JUSTICE**

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Who is here today?

- What type of organization do you work with?
- Where are you located?
- What is your role?

Innovative Pilot Sites

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Webinar Objectives

- **Understanding** the importance of partnership building for survivor safety and economic security.
- **Equipped** with innovative strategies from diverse contexts to enhance economic security for survivors in your own community.
- **Motivated** to continue discussions in your own agency and with other stakeholders to engage in collaborative economic justice work.

Agenda

- CSAJ's National Needs Assessment
- Phase I: Pilot Site Reports
 - Women's Resource Center
 - Texas Council on Family Violence
 - Indiana Legal Services
- Building Partnerships Pilot Report: Highlights & Application
- Phase II: Demonstration Site Work & Next Steps
 - University of Denver
 - All
- Discussion

Consumer Rights for Domestic and Sexual Violence Survivors Initiative

- A national project that enhances economic justice for survivors by building the capacity of lawyers and advocates to provide consumer and economic civil legal advocacy and engage in systemic advocacy to remove barriers to economic security for survivors.
- Began in 2007 with funding from OVC.
- Technical Assistance Project funded by OVW, since 2011.
- Partners include:
 - National Consumer Law Center
 - Home Free
 - Center for Court Innovation
 - Wider Opportunities for Women
 - Expert Advisors

Program Activities

- Guidebook & Advocacy Briefs
- Consumer Practice Webinars
- Individualized Technical Assistance
- Innovative Demonstration Sites
 - Texas Council on Family Violence
 - Women's Resource Center
 - Indiana Legal Services, Low-Income Taxpayers Clinic
 - University of Denver School of Law, Civil Litigation Clinic

Building Partnerships for Economic Justice Technical Assistance

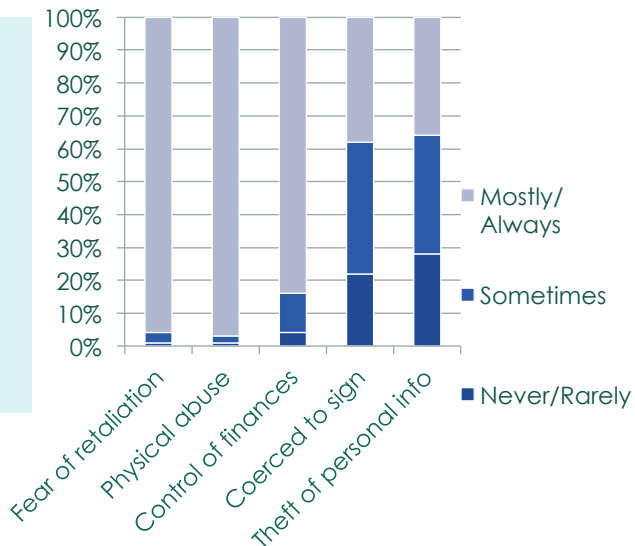
- A [Needs Assessment](#) of domestic violence and consumer rights advocates and attorneys regarding to their capacity and existing partnerships
- Intensive Partnership Building training and technical assistance consisting of: context-specific technical assistance, webinars on collaborative economic advocacy, peer-to-peer site mentoring, and on-site training to four on-the-ground pilot sites.
- A [Building Partnerships for Economic Justice: A Report on Innovative Pilot Projects](#), articulating best practices, grounded in the experiences of the pilot projects

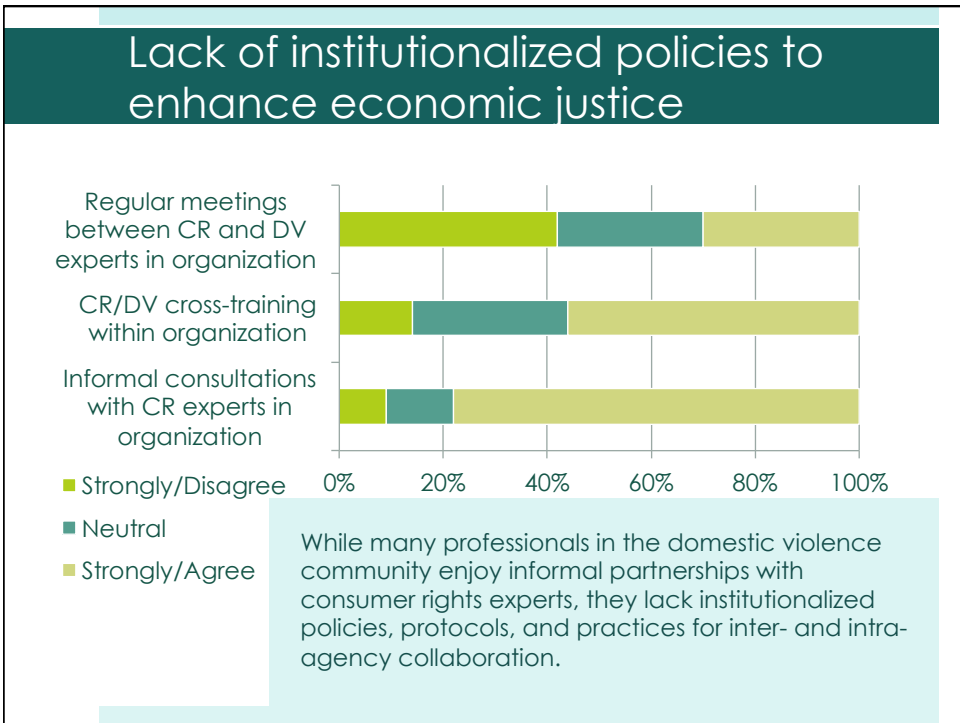
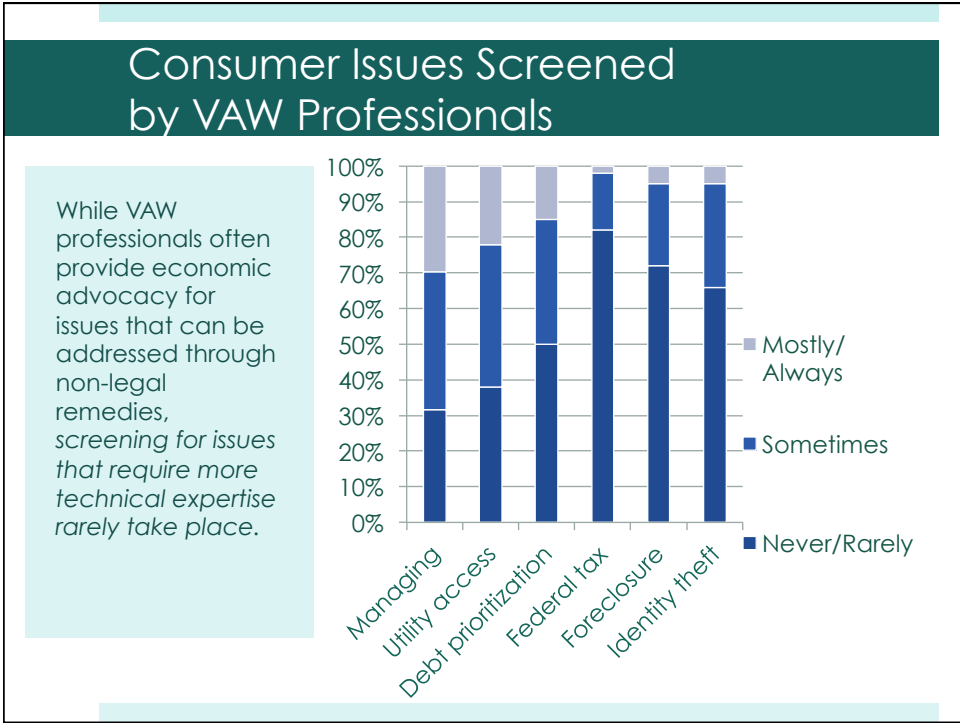
CSAJ's National Economic Advocacy Needs Assessment

- Over 220 lawyers and advocates participated
- Both consumer and DV advocates do some CR for DV survivors work, but there is a gap in intersecting expertise.
- DV advocates often do not:
 - Address ways in which coercion manifests as economic abuse
 - Screen for economic issues that require more technical expertise
 - Develop institutionalized policies, protocols, and practices to encourage inter-and intra-agency collaboration with economic experts.

Inquiries from VAW Professionals

Although VAW professionals provide many services related to coercive control tactics employed by abusers, they rarely address the ways in which coercion manifests as economic abuse.





Introducing the Innovative Sites

■ 2012 – 2014 Pilot Sites

- Texas Council on Family Violence
- Women's Resource Center
- Indiana Legal Services
- Catholic University, Columbus Community Legal Services

■ 2015 – 2016 Demonstration Sites

- NEW! University of Denver School of Law, Civil Litigation Clinic
- TCFV, WRC, and ILS

**Texas Council On
FAMILY VIOLENCE** 
Over Thirty Years of Building a Safer Texas

Krista DelGallo & Mona Muro

Organizational Setting

- Statewide Domestic Violence Coalition
- Membership program-supporting local family violence advocates throughout Texas
- Existing Focus and staffing on economic stability issues

Process: Challenges & Turning Points

- Texas is BIG. (254 Counties)
- TCFV staff capacity in light of the variety of issues to cover (e.g. child welfare, immigration, health, legislative)
- Limited supply of free, expert legal services
- Silos in the legal community (most lawyers practice family law or consumer law)

Process: Challenges & Turning Points

- Focus on consumer legal issues helped us to drill down into this arena
- Identified consumer legal services and networks in Texas
- Through this process, we met two experts
 - Carla Sanchez Adams (Family and consumer law expert serving majorly survivors)
 - Angela Littwin (UT Law School Faculty on Consumer Law and researcher on credit issues for DV survivors)

Lessons Learned

- Presented before a variety of audiences:
 - Texas RioGrande Legal Aid shelter legal advocates conference
 - Poverty Law Conference
 - Housing and Consumer Law Section of State Bar
 - Economic Justice Summit
 - Webinar for advocates and Executive Directors

Outcomes

- Advocates recognize TCFV as a resource on consumer legal issues
- Provided support to research on survivor credit issues
- Became more engaged in consumer policy issues and the groups that work on those (i.e. pay day lending; Texas Appleseed)



Carol Shoener & Jodi Lewis

Women's Resource Center, Inc.

- Community based since 1976
- Barbara J Hart Justice Center 2001
- Dual Program
- Serves Lackawanna and Susquehanna counties in Pennsylvania
- Population: 240,000
- Serves an average of 1,600 women, children, significant others and men per year
- Provides hotline, safe housing, transitional housing, rental assistance, individual/system's advocacy, legal accompaniment, individual/group support counseling, education, and civil legal representation
- Total Budget: \$2,000,000
- Total Staffing: 33 (21FT/12PT)

Opportunity for Change

In October of 2012 the WRC was forced to close the onsite Safe House due to:

- Critical, sudden staff turnover
- Significant reduction in Safe House funding

Hotel use for Safe Housing created:

- A reduction in the number of survivors accessing Safe Housing
- In depth Safe House assessment (safety risks, homelessness, referrals)
- Housing First – Shifted focus and funding to housing (rental asst., etc)
- Increased advocacy work to avert a crisis, if possible (incl. legal remedies)
- Increased economic advocacy and safety planning for leaving
- Increased offering of Women's meetings (legal, economic/housing, etc)
- Increased survivor autonomy (reduce role as rule-makers)

Next: Continue to work toward providing a Continuum of Economic and Housing Options

Building WRC's Economic Advocacy Project

1. Reevaluate the way survivors were being served in the organization
2. Institutionalize the economic advocacy work that was already being done
3. Engage the local community in reducing survivors' economic barriers to safety

Approach: Building Partnerships for Economic Justice

1. A core group of advocates and attorneys were established and started the dialogue:
 - What factors keep women in poverty?
 - What are the organizational training needs?
 - How does the WRC institutionalize assessment of economic abuse and needs?
 - Who are the community partners we want to engage?
 - How do we include survivors in the process
2. Scheduled meetings with identified community partners
 - Met with advocates, attorneys and survivors
 - Morning meetings, Dinner meetings, Staff meetings

Approach: Building Partnerships for Economic Justice

3. Engaged in systems advocacy initiatives and educational activities that specifically address the economic and housing needs of survivors.
4. Creating forums for survivor input and association
 - TH Advisory Council
 - Justice Center Annual Surveys

Challenges to Economic Advocacy Work

INTERNAL

- Defunding
- Leadership & Turn-Over
- Impact of Understaffing

EXTERNAL

- Lack of safe, affordable housing stock (*Housing First*)
- Lack of court ordered economic remedies
- Lack of pro bono civil attorneys providing consumer law representation
- Engaging survivors

Lessons Learned

- Organizational change creates opportunity
- Economic advocacy work is constantly evolving
- Funders want to invest in models that demonstrate increased economic and housing stability for survivors
- Its more beneficial to assist survivors before the point of crisis

Outcomes

- American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU) and National Housing Law Project (NHLP) partnership
- Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP) partnership
- Private Foundation Support for economic and housing work (Willary, Weinberg)
- Public Housing Authority (PHA) collaboration for enhanced response to survivors
- Dinner Meetings
- Transitional Housing (TH) Advisory Council
- MOU TH Partnership Team



Indiana Legal Services, Low Income Taxpayer Clinic

Jamie Andree

Organizational Setting

- LITC helps low income taxpayers solve federal and state tax problems.
- Our LITC works statewide. We're located in a branch office of ILS, a "full service" legal services program.
- Survivors' tax problems, often related to abuse, lead to lost income & assets and inability to find jobs or housing.
- Increasing access to representation to solve tax problems improves survivors' economic stability.

Process & Challenges

- 3 prong approach:
 - Teach survivors' lawyers how to improve tax impact of family law decisions;
 - partner with agencies to reach survivors;
 - represent survivors to resolve tax issues.
- Challenges:
 - Information overload – audience loses interest (tax is perceived as too complicated or boring!)
 - Getting lawyers to use the information in actual cases
 - Getting survivors to come to us/agencies to refer them

Turning Points & Key Takeaways

- Major turning point:
 - Realize solving tax problems is not top priority for survivors
- Reach people at the right time:
 - Lawyers: During an actual case
 - Survivors: When they are ready (after safety, housing, custody, for example)
 - Agencies: Ongoing "loose" connections, Formalize partnerships with right fit in advocacy work
- Systemic changes are important
- Trust has to be earned

Lessons Learned

- Outreach Matters
- Targeted Trainings
- New Partners
- Assess Partners' Needs & Capacity
- There's no path straight to the goal!

Outcomes

- Educated a lot of lawyers – over 500.
- Lawyers began to consult with us.
- Developed ability to project actual \$ impact of certain family law choices that impact tax benefits.
- Increase in the number of survivors seeking tax help.

Groundbreaking Report



[Download](#)

- ▣ Introduction
- ▣ Site Work Summaries
- ▣ Promising Practices Guide
 - ▣ Process
 - ▣ Partnership & Collaboration

Process: Perspective Before Solutions



- ▣ Less: "This is what I have to offer."
- ▣ More: "What does your work look like? What do you see? What are the gaps and opportunities?"
- ▣ Perspective Building



Collectively develop solutions

Applications to your context

- Who are potential partners that you might work with?
- How might you gain a richer understanding of their perspective (to enrich the partnership)?

Process: Set Manageable and Flexible Goals



- The Efficacy Light Bulb:
 - Adopt the philosophy
 - Lay Groundwork
 - Seize opportunities



Redirect resources

Offset Challenges

Build Substantive Knowledge Base (more intensive)

Applications to your context

- Articulate a possible goal for your organization/ community/state.
- What challenges do you anticipate?
- What steps might you take to ensure that stakeholders are grounded in a common philosophy?

Partnership & Collaboration

Promising Practice

- **Match size & strength of network to intended goals**
- **Ensure a solid foundation**
- **Create partnerships, not referral systems**

Application

- What's the scope of my project (national, state, local)?
- What partners have access to the people and information I need to implement the project?
- Is my organization ready to do this work?
- What steps do you need to take to create the infrastructure?
- What protocols can you implement to ensure coordinated advocacy?
- How can you ground advocates in a common advocacy framework?

Demonstration Site Work 2015 - 2016

- Phase I: Assessment
 - Internal SWOT Analysis
 - Information/data gathering
 - Opportunity Map
- Phase II: Strategic Plan
- Phase III: Project Implementation
- Phase IV: Analyze Plan Efficacy
 - Monthly Calls, Peer 2 Peer webinars, Ad-hoc TA with Expert Advisors



UNIVERSITY *of*
DENVER

STURM COLLEGE OF LAW
Civil Litigation Clinic

Tammy Kuennen

Organizational Setting

- Student Law Office is situated within University of Denver Sturm College of Law
 - Very strong public interest and experiential learning foci
 - Clinical course where students represent live clients
 - Protection orders, housing, wage & hour
- Law school is part of larger university
 - Opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and research

Goals of Work: Needs Assessment

- Goals of work
 - Global: increase survivor access to consumer and economic security by mapping survivor and community needs, and . . .
 - Identifying and implementing strategies to meet needs
- Needs Assessment
 - SWOT (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) survey

Preliminary Insights

- Strengths
 - Desire to provide holistic services
 - Strong commitment to work in partnership and respect autonomy of survivors in advocacy community statewide
- Weaknesses
 - Need for training, and for cross-training
 - Desire for long-term solutions
- Opportunities
 - Dreams of corporate partnerships
- Threats
 - Fear of lack of capacity to provide additional services

Anticipated Activities & Project Goals

- Next steps
 - Educate self
 - Continue mapping whole area of capacities, needs and stakeholders
 - Think expansively regarding unique organizational setting (functioning law practice within academic institution), while
 - Matching the needs of survivors and community with opportunities presented by academic setting
- Anticipated Future Directions

All Sites: Next Steps



- ▣ What questions are driving your next phase of work?
- ▣ What do you envision as your future directions?

TCFV: Future Directions

- ▣ Intend to keep connected with new partners and the network of consumer legal attorneys
- ▣ Moving into a housing focus
 - ▣ Credit issues impact housing options-housing instability can impact credit
 - ▣ Leverage new contacts on the Housing and Consumer Law Group

WRC: Future Directions

Questions

- What are the economic priorities of survivors coming to WRC?
- How to develop advocate/attorney competencies in handling survivor's long term needs vs crisis/short term needs?

Next Steps:


- Tailor survey for survivors and community partners
- Analyze survey results
- Organize a meeting between community partners, advocates, attorneys and survivors to identify needs and goals
- Cross-training with community partners and consumer rights lawyers

ILS: Future Directions


- Create a tax check list for family law attorneys.
- Developing a tax-specific survey instrument for partners
- Learn more about organizations that help survivors become economically self-sufficient in order to develop new partnerships.
- Explore other strategies for raising awareness about and demystifying tax issues faced by survivors.

Questions & Discussion


Thank You!




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Women's Resource Center
We are your safe place.

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Interested in doing this work in your organization, community, state?



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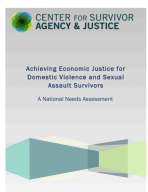
Supporting Efforts for Systems Change

Recent Examples:


- [Comments to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#)
 - to enhance survivor protections and autonomy in negotiating with mortgage companies.
- [Comments to the Department of Education](#)
 - opposing a provision in the new repayment plan calculations that would eliminate the option for married borrowers to file income taxes as "married filing separately" in order to qualify for the repayment plan.

**What barriers do you see in your community and state?
How can CSAJ support your work?**


Resources




[CSAJ's National Needs Assessment Report](#)



[Economic Ripple Effect DV Report Article](#)




[CSAJ's Pilot Site Report](#)



[CSAJ's Assessment Tool for Attorneys & Advocates](#)

- [CSAJ's Resource Library](#)
- [Past webinars on consumer issues](#)

Thank You!



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