

Victim Interviews

Assessment of Help Line

Interviewed Victims Gave High Ratings to Help Line

- The average rating was 4.41 on a 5-point scale (5 = very useful)
- Latino victims rated it the highest (4.59)
- White victims rated it the lowest (4.28)
- Only a few of the callers (10%) reported the Help Line was not useful
 - These “low-raters” had a more difficult time connecting to the referred services than “high raters.”

The Study

In 2004 and 2005, 399 telephone interviews were conducted with domestic violence victim callers to the Help Line. Each interview was conducted two or more weeks after the individual called the Help Line. The data collected from each interview was analyzed using both SPSS and N6.

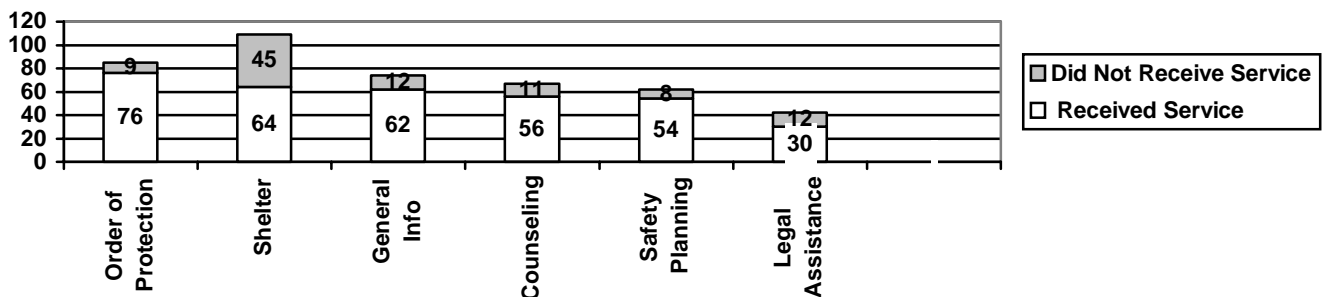
Services Requested by Victims Interviewed

Victims interviewed reported requesting various combinations of 3 distinct kinds of help: information, direct linkages to community based services, and/or referrals to community based services.

- Interviewees requested a total of 396 types of information beyond referrals and linkages
- Interviewees requested a total of 430 referrals to community based service(s)
- Interviewees were directly linked to a total of 59 community based service(s)
- 21% of victims reported accessing the Help Line only for general information or someone to talk to

The most prominent services requested included Orders of Protection, shelter, general information, counseling, safety tips and planning, and legal assistance.

Services Requested and Information/Referral Received From Help Line



Majority of Victims Interviewed Tried to Connect to the Services

- We have follow-up information on 302 victims who received a referral or linkage from the Help Line.
- Approximately two-thirds (64%) of these interviewees tried to connect to the referred service.
- 48% of interviewees were able to get the service they wanted.

Common Reasons Victims Did Not Connect to the Referred Service

- The service was not available (23%)
- The referred agency’s phone line was busy or the victim was put on hold
- The interviewed victim reported being ineligible for the service (5%)
- The referred service was too far away (8%), or the victim decided on another non-Help Line referred service (2%)

Interviewed Victims Report How They Were Impacted by their Call to the Help Line

Interviewees told how their experience with the Help Line and the information they received actually affected their situations.

- 67% said their experience with the Help Line resulted in increased knowledge or awareness. They made comments such as, “I know now what my options are and what I need to do” or “ I understand what an Order of Protection is now and how it can help me.”
- 53% identified an emotional response to their experience with the Help Line. These effects varied from simply feeling better about oneself after calling, to confronting their situation, and rejecting the denial of abuse.
- 38% reported that the call resulted in an “action.” For example, “I knew I wanted an Order of Protection. So, I went and got it.”

VIRA (Victim Information and Referral Advocate): Key to the Success of the Help Line

370 of 399 victims made some unsolicited reference to the importance of the interaction between the VIRA and themselves. Three themes were identified in victim/VIRA interactions:

Strong Personal Connection

- “I was mistrustful to call at first but the VIRA really made me feel like I was talking to a friend. She made me feel secure.”
- “The VIRA was really on my side. She reminded me how much courage it took to call. It was someone who really got what I was saying.”

Comfort and Support

- “I didn’t just get information; I got someone who knew what it was like to be where I am. The VIRA understood and she didn’t judge me. She was there, when I couldn’t be there for myself.”
- “Who else can you call in the middle of the night?”
- “The VIRA was there to just calm me down and let me know I did the right thing. I didn’t know what I wanted, but she made me feel better.”

Victim comment,
"It let me know someone was there to talk to and I didn't have to feel embarrassed. You know sometimes when you talk to your family, you get judged. But they [the Help Line]... someone is always there. They keep assuring you, you can leave the situation for good, it's a comfort."

Strategizing

- “The operator understood my story and was comforting. She also reminded me that when renewing my Order of Protection to be careful to not let him (abuser) know where I am. She explained to me how to do that, we had a plan.”
- “She gave me lots of information and she didn’t rush me. She said ‘let time take its course and let’s think about what to do now.’ She told me to change my locks, and I hadn’t thought of that. She also told me to read up on abuse, understand what is going on. Being informed *is power*.”

Some Victims (35%) Were Originally Hesitant to Call the Help Line

- Callers were hesitant to call the Help Line (first call) for a variety of reasons:
 - Didn’t know what to expect (49)
 - Fearful (26) or embarrassed (17)
 - Did not want to take an action that would acknowledge their abuse because the acknowledgement might put them at risk (31)
 - Discomfort with being labeled a victim of domestic violence (7)
 - Worry about language barriers (8)
 - Unsure if what they experienced was abuse (8)