

Criminal Justice Agency Training Focuses on Protocols for Response to Family Violence

The 22nd Annual McGuire Memorial Conference on Family Violence scheduled for September 29 and 30, 2011 in Billings, will provide multidisciplinary training on best practice methods for agencies within the criminal justice system to improve their response to domestic violence cases. This training will bring representatives from Praxis International and criminal justice agency members from Saint Paul, Minnesota to speak about the *Blueprint for Safety* and their ongoing efforts toward implementation of the project's protocols. Ellen Pence and Praxis International developed the *Blueprint for Safety* as a prototype that can be used by any community hoping to link its criminal justice agencies together in a coherent, philosophically sound domestic violence intervention model. The target audience for this year's conference includes law enforcement, defense and prosecuting attorneys, victim advocates, judges and court administrators, call center operators and dispatchers, practitioners, and community members who are engaged in the criminal justice system or work directly with offenders or victims of family violence.

The foundational principles of the Blueprint for Safety are:

1. To adhere to an interagency approach and collective intervention goals;
2. To build attention to the context and severity of abuse into each intervention;
3. To recognize that most domestic violence is a patterned crime requiring continuing engagement with victims and offenders;
4. To establish sure and swift consequences for continued abuse;
5. To use the power of the criminal justice system to send a message of help and accountability and;
6. To act in ways to reduce unintended consequences and the disparity of impact on victims and offenders.

More information on the Blueprint for Safety may be found at www.praxisinternational.org.

The Task Force balances the cost of providing high-quality training against ensuring that it is affordable for agencies and non-profit organizations that are the targeted audience. This year, special emphasis will be placed on providing scholarships or reduced fees for personnel working within public agencies who have responsibilities in family violence cases. Allowances are also made for students and individuals, especially victims and parents, who cannot afford the registration fee but would benefit from this specialized training. The annual McGuire Memorial Conference on Family Violence provides training for approximately 150 people every year with nearly 40% coming from outside of the Billings area, addressing some of the unmet training needs for people in other areas of Montana.

This annual conference is provided by the Billings Area Family Violence Task Force whose goal is reducing family violence through education and coordination among service providers and the public. The Task Force is a member of the Montana Crime Prevention Association. For more information on the conference or the Task Force in general go to the website at www.bafvtf.org.