

Maricopa Association of Governments
Regional Domestic Violence Council
Victim Services Subcommittee
Domestic Violence Shelter Needs White Paper

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The MAG Regional Domestic Violence Council has been working since 1999 to end domestic violence in the MAG Region. The Council has provided a forum where service providers, law enforcement officers, business leaders, elected officials, and community representatives can come together to address the complex problem of domestic violence and work together on a coordinated approach to its solution. The Council has been a catalyst for increased awareness, education, collaboration, and change - all of which are needed to stop the violence. The Victim Services Subcommittee operates under the MAG Regional Domestic Violence Council with the goal of reliably and accurately establishing the level of need for domestic violence services in the MAG Region.

With that goal in mind, the purpose of this white paper is to document the need for domestic violence shelters in the MAG Region. Like many human services issues, domestic violence is complex. The purpose of this paper is not to describe the reasons for domestic violence nor will it suggest how to reduce or eliminate it. Instead, it paints a picture of the gap between demand and need—it provides an analysis of how victims find shelter in certain cases and encounter obstacles in others. There are many ways victims seek shelter but often they cannot find it because there are not beds available for them. Several sources of data will be used to document the results of this study which is being funded through an Innovative grant provided by the Governor's office. The whitepaper will demonstrate that many requests for shelter are being unmet because of the lack of beds available for victims and their families, however, the problem is not insurmountable.

Domestic Violence Services Demand

Community Information & Referral report

The MAG Region has nine domestic violence shelters that collectively provide 325 total beds. The shelters are supported through public and private funding and community resources. The Community Network for Accessing Shelter (CONTACS) hotline provided by the non-profit organization Community Information & Referral is one of the primary means by which domestic violence shelter assistance is requested, other than direct calls made to shelters. For fiscal year 2004/2005 (7/1/04 to 6/30/05), the following statistics can be gleaned from CONTACS hotline information (see Appendix A for complete report):

- Domestic violence victims' families seeking shelter: 2346 calls received with 43.6% connected to shelter and 50% being repeat calls for shelter.

- Domestic violence victims' singles seeking shelter: 5062 calls received with 70.4% connected to a shelter and 40.1% being repeat calls for shelter.
- There were 3198 unduplicated requests for domestic violence shelter to CONTACTS (repeat callers not included).
- 56.4% of families' shelter needs were unmet and 29.6% of singles' shelter needs were unmet due to lack of shelter availability at the time victims called.

PREHAB of Arizona Report

Another shelter option when beds are not available at the MAG Region shelters is to place victims in short-term hotel stays coordinated by the nonprofit organization PREHAB of Arizona through the Domestic Violence Safe Temporary Overflow Program (DVSTOP), to which victims are referred through the CONTACTS hotline. For fiscal year 2004/2005 (7/1/04 to 6/30/05), PREHAB reported the following (see Appendix B for complete report):

- 279 women and 592 children were provided a hotel/motel when shelter was not available.
- 628 nights stays were used (218 donated, 410 purchased by Red Cross and PREHAB) with an average stay per family of just over two nights.
 - As of July 1st, 2005, all beds will be purchased by Red Cross and PREHAB
- 217 families were subsequently placed in shelter with the others relocating, moving in with family or friends, or returning to the abuser.

Department of Public Safety Reports

The Arizona Department of Public Safety is responsible for compiling the numbers of police reports filed as a result of domestic violence. In 2004, Maricopa County had a total of 20,442 domestic violence reports generated by all countywide law enforcement agencies (municipal police departments, county sheriff, and university police). The monthly average was 1704 reports generated. These data represent numbers of incidents of reported domestic violence and are not correlated with calls for shelter.

Many agencies report on domestic violence and it is clear that there is great need for domestic violence services to help victims in the MAG Region. What these reports demonstrate is both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to provide more shelter so that victims' needs are met the first time they call for shelter. The reality is that at least 325 more beds are needed as nearly half of requests for shelter are met on the first call. As further focus group and survey data from the nine MAG Region shelters show, shelters are needed to access other human services and victims' needs are being met at them.

Shelter Survey Results

In an effort to find out more detail about the needs of victims requiring shelter, the Victims Services Subcommittee of the Regional Domestic Violence Council of the Maricopa Association of Governments commissioned a survey that was administered at each of the nine shelters in the MAG Region during March/April, 2005. One survey was administered to shelter residents and one was conducted over the telephone (see Appendix D). A total of 305 surveys was completed by shelter residents and 488 were completed over the phone. The goal of the survey was to determine how many calls a victim had to make to find shelter and where else they might seek help.

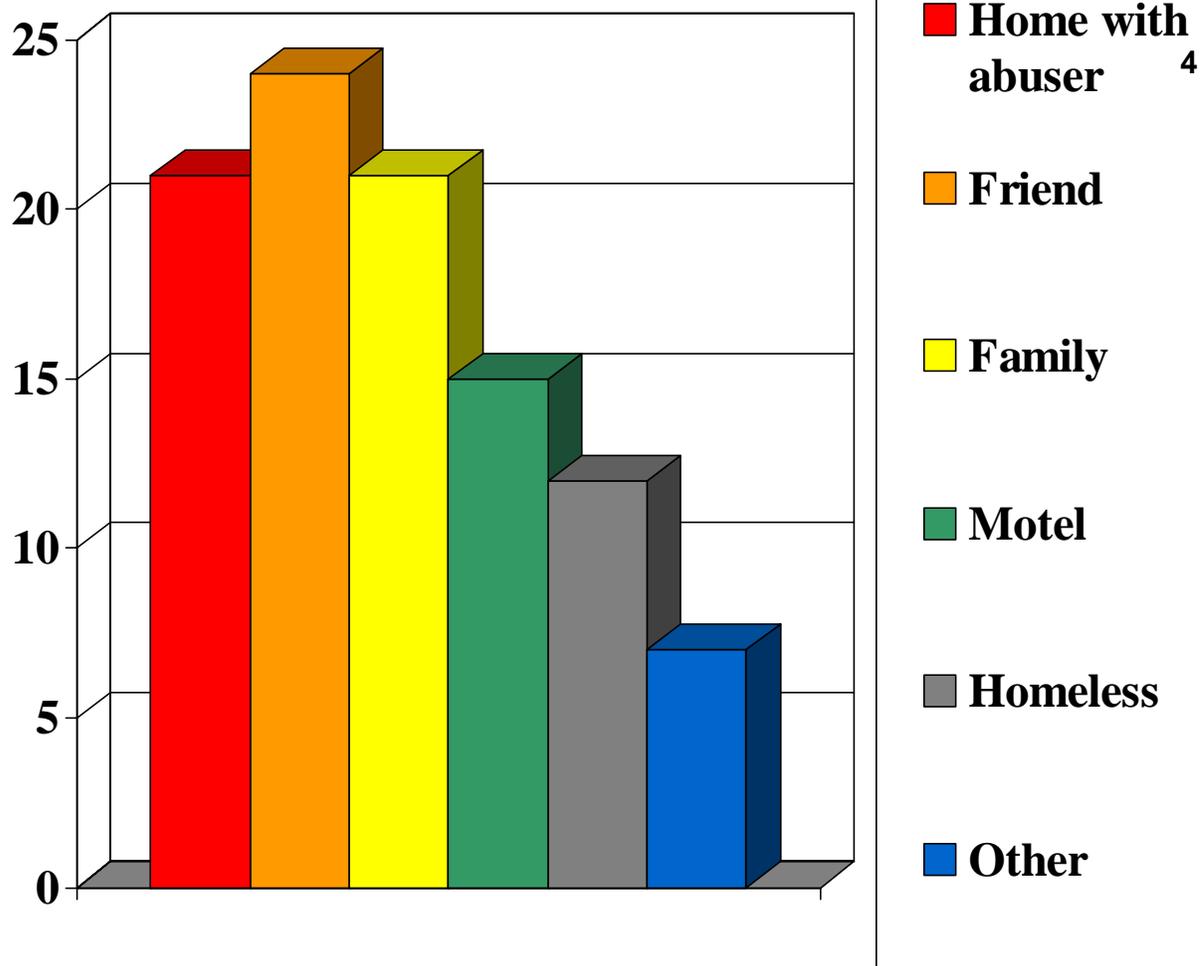
Domestic Violence Shelter Survey

The first question asked: "After you decided to get help, how many phone calls did you have to make before you found this shelter?" The 305 respondents indicated they made 668 calls before finding shelter which meant it took at least two calls to find shelter. Respondents also made many other calls to other locations to find shelter that include:

- 383 calls made to other shelters
- 269 calls made to friends
- 188 calls made to the police
- 183 calls made to family
- 145 calls made to the CONTACTS hotline (and other small percentage calls to others).

Another survey question asked residents where they stayed if they could not find shelter the same day they needed help. The data shows that:

- 23% indicated they stayed at home, which meant they stayed with their abuser and remained in danger.
- 26% stayed with a friend.
- 23% stayed with a family member.
- 30% stayed at a hotel or on the street.
- Most respondents were referred to the shelter in which they stayed although some used the Internet or phone book, word-of-mouth, or were referred by the police.



Respondents also indicated in another question that “no beds available” was the most significant difficulty in finding shelter, followed distantly by language and transportation barriers. Notably, all respondents were women with an average age of 34 and who had an average of two children (see Appendix C).

Telephone Survey

The telephone survey was very simple and asked two questions: “When you decided you needed help this time, is this the first call you made for shelter?” Responses were nearly evenly balanced: 50.8% answered yes and 49.2% said no.

The second question asked “How many different places have you called today trying to find domestic violence shelter?” Approximately one-third (33.4%) said they had called one other place, 16.0% said two, 11.5% said three. The remaining responses constituted very small percentages (see Appendix D).

The surveys make it clear that finding shelter with one phone call is very difficult which supports data that is collected monthly at each shelter by DES. The survey results are representative of the annual statistics that DES generates that indicate “no beds” is the primary reason victims of domestic violence are turned away from shelter.

Duplicated vs. Unduplicated Calls

In processing information about victim calls, every effort is made to note duplicate calls. The CONTACTS hotline tracks the number and percentage of repeat callers. Women need to call back for a variety of reasons which CONTACTS tracks:

- Lack of initial availability of shelters
- Abuser in the room when they called
- Call was disconnected or interrupted
- Directed to call back from a safe location
- Call back for placement information, etc.

The primary reason victims call back is because shelter is not available when they call the first time. All of the data in this white paper supports that claim and demonstrates the need for more beds. However, nearly 1 in 2 women and families do find shelter when they call, which means at least another 325 beds are needed to meet the current demand for shelters in the MAG Region.

The problem is not insurmountable but population growth also needs to be considered when determining the ultimate demand and where new shelters should be built. Two maps are provided in Appendix F that shows where current domestic violence shelters are (without specific addresses indicated) in the MAG Region and where the urban concentrations are predicted to be in 2020. Urban centers may be the best place for shelters to be built so that victims have access to jobs and other services nearby (as opposed to the suburbs where you have to travel distantly for work, school, shopping, etc.). Additionally, current bus routes are identified that are crucial for victims to access shelter, other human services, job opportunities, schools for their children, etc. Access to public transportation should also be a consideration when deciding where to place a new shelter. As always, growth must be considered when deciding where future shelters should be placed.

The Voices of the Victims

In fall, 2004, an in-depth focus group was conducted at one of the shelters to get the perspective of the resident victims and their needs. The responses are synthesized by question and are quite telling in regards to additional services women need to live independently.

What are the services here that are useful to you?

- Counseling services
- Employment services
- Housing placement

What services are needed but unavailable?

- Assistance in applying for subsidized housing

- Women indicated housing is not as important as having an education, independence, and job skills; given these, women said they could find housing on their own.

What barriers do you face?

- Not having enough confidence, education, and job experience

What has helped you the most?

- Shelters and the safety they provide help to access other human services
- Counseling

What do you need?

- A job and affordable housing

How hard was it to access services?

- Some clients received assistance on the first call; others called for days and some for weeks

What would have helped to access services?

- More shelter space
- Standardized shelters so people receive same quality of care at all shelters

If you ran the shelter what would you do?

- Build bigger, better shelter; build apartments
- Offer more programs such as promoting self-esteem, empowerment, moving forward, how to avoid the situation, and education

Over the summer of 2005, several more focus groups were conducted throughout the MAG Region in order to solicit feedback from domestic violence survivors on what they feel are the most significant strengths in the domestic violence system that exists today, what are the most pressing needs, and what are some possible solutions to this complex problem. Significant trends emerged from the results that are summarized here.

Significant Strengths/What is Working Well?

- Support groups
- Domestic violence advocates in the courts or accompanying police responders
- Referrals to services provided by responding police officers
- Counseling services offered by providers
- Assistance from churches

Most Pressing Needs/What is Not Working Well?

- More affordable housing options after leaving emergency shelters
- Better public transportation to reach service providers and employers

- Bore general public awareness about domestic violence
- Better training for police officers and court officers who deal with domestic violence victims
- Better access to affordable childcare
- Easier ways to access information about what services are available
- More assistance through the legal process

Possible Solutions

- Provide awareness and prevention education to children at a younger age, beginning at elementary school instead of high school
- Tougher, more consistent penalties for batterers and hold them more accountable
- Educate the general public on how to recognize the signs of abuse

Summary

It is clear that there is more demand than capacity for domestic violence shelters in the MAG Region. The current capacity of 325 beds in nine shelters is not enough. Victims have to call several times and several places to find shelter. For families, being placed in a shelter when needed is very difficult. Single victims are more easily placed for obvious reasons. The DVSTOP program does provide hotel/motel space to a small number of families who need someplace to stay until other shelter becomes available.

The survey results show that the lack of beds is the primary reason victims keep calling back and/or where they otherwise turn for help. The survey also shows that some women and children have to remain with their abuser because of lack of shelter which is unacceptable. The focus group results demonstrate that shelters also provide access to other essential human services that women need to become independent and provide for their children.

Action Plan

The good news is that nearly 50% of women and children requesting shelter are receiving it; the existing 325 beds are meeting half the need. At least another 325 more beds are needed to meet current demands. Future demand is very hard to predict.

An additional 325 beds can be funded through a variety of public and private sources (e.g., state, county, and local governments, non-profit organizations, private donors, etc). The beds can be added incrementally so that costs can be incurred overtime (1, 3, 5, or 10 years) and through a variety of partners. It will only take the commitment of the partners to make it happen.

Capital and operational cost estimates

DES estimates that the annual operational cost of one shelter bed ranges from \$20,000 to \$25,000. An additional 325 beds would have an annual operational cost ranging from \$6.5 million to \$8.1 million.

Capital cost estimates from DES and Housing Arizona range from \$105/sq. ft. to \$150/sq. ft with the higher range including construction costs, design fees, permits, etc. Neither estimate includes land purchase costs. Many factors would determine the final cost that includes:

- Room arrangements (number of single, double, group living quarters)
- Kitchen arrangements (number of appliances, number of kitchens)
- Bathroom arrangements (number of shared, private, handicap facilities)
- New facility
- Renovation of existing facility (adaptive reuse or tenant improvement)
- Addition to an existing shelter

Of course, each shelter project will need to consider both the capital and operational costs to which a variety of agencies and organizations can contribute.

Action is required sooner than later as Governor Napolitano stated in the *Arizona Republic's* special section on domestic violence (April 17th, 2005):

“If one in three women were dying from a curable disease or from random acts of violence, decision-makers would be doing everything in their power to stop it, but because this crime happens behind closed doors and in the context of family, it is not given the same attention. Domestic violence can no longer be viewed as a private family matter or as solely a women’s issue. It is a public health and safety issue with significant repercussions for our communities. It is a preventable crime and we must do everything in our power to stop it.”

A domestic violence survey jointly commissioned by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy and Maricopa Association of Governments found that Valley residents understand the problem and need for shelter and support of domestic violence victims.

- 72% of Valley residents consider domestic violence a major problem
- 40% of Valley residents revealed that they or someone they know has been a victim of domestic violence
- 58% thought that making more shelter space available was an effective method for reducing domestic violence
- 87% of Valley residents indicated they would call an external resource for help given the situation of “aggressive behavior between intimate partners that threatens or causes physical injury or property damage.”

Action is essential to provide the shelters needed for the victims of domestic violence in the MAG Region.

Appendix A: FY04/05 CONTACS report
 Appendix B: FY04/05 PREHAB report
 Appendix C: Shelter & telephone surveys
 Appendix D: Summary of survey results
 Appendix E: MAG maps