

the consequences of trauma for domestic and sexual assault survivors

Durham Crisis Response Center (DCRC) has served thousands of victim/survivors in the Durham community since the late 1970s. Its focus is on domestic violence—also called interpersonal violence (IPV)—and sexual violence. Both domestic and sexual violence are pervasive crimes that plague society; their prevalence can be seen in the following data:

- A woman is assaulted or beaten every 9 seconds in the US; 1 in 3 women and 1 in 7 men have been severely physically abused by an intimate partner.
- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 77 men has experienced rape in their lifetime.
- More than 15 million children are exposed to domestic violence every year.
- Young women, ages 16-24, experience the highest rates of IPV and sexual assault.

Following sexual assault or domestic violence, a victim/survivor may be confused and scared as they worry about their safety, who they can tell, and whether they will be believed or blamed. In contrast, someone whose home has been burglarized or car stolen doesn't automatically think the crime was their fault; they seek help immediately! Yet, as a result of social conditioning, victims of sexual or domestic violence often suffer feelings of guilt and shame.

CONSEQUENCES

There is a cost for these crimes—financial and otherwise—and every day victim/survivors, as well as society, pay those costs. Survivors' challenges begin with the emotional impact. They endure the emotional and psychological conflict of shock and denial coupled with internal guilt and shame. Additionally, the outcome might be that a perpetrator walks free from accountability and this is a terrible

consequence, not only for the victim, but for the entire community.

Victim/survivors can suffer from depression, anxiety, the inability to trust, flashbacks, sleep disturbances, and other symptoms related to Post-traumatic Syndrome Disorder (PTSD). They also can suffer health related issues including migraines, gynecological complications and injuries, sexual dysfunction, delayed prenatal care, unintended pregnancy, and many other issues. They also may resort to other dangerous activities that impact their overall health such as smoking, substance abuse, and risk-taking sexual behaviors.

Health care is a major concern and often our clients have limited access to health care or insurance. Without adequate coverage, they may receive marginal care—and the cost for their care is then borne by society.

THE COSTS OF TRAUMA

Domestic violence costs the U.S. economy \$8.3 billion in expenses annually—from a combination of higher medical costs and lost productivity—while employers report costs of up to \$13 billion. Rape is the most costly for its victims, at \$127 billion a year, which includes medical costs, lost wages, pain, suffering, and lost quality of life.

THE NEED FOR SERVICES

The impact of domestic and sexual assault can be far more extensive than what meets the eye, and far more devastating than survivors can even explain. These crimes affect everyone, including communities and systems, with consequences that reverberate throughout society-at-large.

For example, the 2015 Domestic Violence County North Carolina Summary report revealed that 1,576 victims were served on one day, Sept. 16, 2015, with 820 finding shelter by local

programs. Some 756 received non-residential help—counseling, legal advocacy and child support groups. Of that day's total, there were 102 with unmet requests for services, of which 61 percent needed housing.

Most NC programs reported a critical shortage of funds and staff to assist victims. The census revealed that most programs throughout the state experienced funding cuts—private and governmental—leading to staff cuts and reductions. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness, and Durham County is grossly under capacity to shelter clients, turning away, on average, over 100 persons per year.

In 2016, DCRC received over 3,400 calls to the crisis line and sheltered 142 women and children. We turned away 90 women, not including the children they would have come with them, because we lacked capacity. We provided a variety of services to 361 sexual assault clients, conducted 88 support group sessions and provided 463 individual counseling sessions.

The trauma of domestic and sexual violence demands response from many sources. Contact the rape crisis or domestic violence program in your area and volunteer to help become a change agent. Discover how you can help. Or, contact the state coalitions:

- NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault www.nccasa.org
- NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence www.nccadv.org [link](#)

24-HOUR CRISIS LINE

PHONE:

919-403-6562 (English)

919-519-3735 (Español)

EMAIL:

crisisline@durhamcrisisresponse.org

Aurelia Sands Belle is Executive Director of the Durham Crisis Response Center. For information or to donate, contact the Center at: 206 N. Dillard Street, Durham, NC 27701; (919) 403-9425 or www.durhamcrisisresponse.org. Your support ensures that DCRC can serve survivors of domestic and sexual violence 24 hours each day, 365 days each year.