



Legislative Audit Division

Performance Audit Summary

Domestic Violence Program

December 2000

Introduction

The Legislative Audit Committee requested a performance audit of the operations of the state's Domestic Violence Program. The program is located in the Program Bureau of the Child and Family Services Division within the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS).

The objectives of audit work were to:

1. Assess the program's operations and evaluate procedures used for program management and for monitoring the programs receiving grant awards.
2. Evaluate program operations for compliance with statutes and administrative rules and determine if statutes and rules provide sufficient guidance to local programs.
3. Identify the role of other state agencies and nonprofit programs and determine their involvement with the administration and funding of the local programs.
4. Determine the effect of increased federal and state funding on the grants awarded local programs.

Background

The mission of the state Domestic Violence Program is to award and manage grants to local Domestic Violence Programs. The 1979 Legislature enacted the originating statute that created the Domestic Violence Program. Title 52, chapter 6, part 1, MCA, gave DPHHS the authority to allocate federal grant money and state appropriations to battered spouses and domestic violence programs. The primary source of funding for the Domestic Violence Program at inception was marriage license fees. These fees continue to be collected, but the primary source shifted to federal funding in 1986.

Chapter 484, enacted by the 1997 Legislature, established an additional funding source for the Domestic Violence Program. Section 40-15-110, MCA, provides DPHHS with the authority to distribute money generated from fees for filing petitions of dissolution of marriage and petitions for legal separation to agencies that provide direct services to victims of partner or family member assault.

The state program manager applies for federal grant funds on an annual basis. Federal funding is based on the population of the state. Until fiscal year 1997-98, federal funding for Montana was approximately \$200,000. Since then, Montana's federal grant increased to approximately \$400,000. Between fiscal years 1995-96 and 1999-00, general fund appropriations were approximately \$146,000. State special revenue of approximately \$127,000 was added to the Domestic Violence Program during fiscal year 1997-98. The increased federal and state special revenue funding allowed for the addition of five new programs and increased grant awards for existing programs.

Grants to Local Programs

Domestic violence grants are awarded by the state program to nonprofit organizations on an annual basis. The grant solicitation process begins with a request for proposal advertised in local newspapers and sent to all funded programs. Upon the receipt of a grant application, a selection committee reviews the applications. The selection committee is made up of individuals representing the Montana Board of Crime Control, the Sexual Assault Program, the Montana Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (the Coalition) and the Domestic Violence Program manager.

The following table lists the total amount of grant awards by the Domestic Violence Program for fiscal years 1996-97 through 1999-00.

<i>Domestic Violence Grant Awards Fiscal Years 1996-97 through 1999-00</i>		
Year	Number	Amount
1996-97	21	\$334,000
1997-98	23	\$674,017
1998-99	24	\$651,705
1999-00	24	\$684,000

In addition to the state Domestic Violence Program, local domestic violence programs can apply for grants from the Montana Board of Crime Control, the Sexual Assault Grant Program, and national organizations. Local programs also receive financial support from their local communities.

The Coalition also provides assistance to local domestic violence programs. The Coalition receives direct federal funding that is designed to provide technical assistance, resource development, and training to the local programs.

Local programs operate independently from one another, yet provide similar services. Examples of services provided included crisis hotline, crisis counseling, shelter or safe-home accommodations, and transportation. Local programs reported they served approximately 10,600 victims during fiscal year 1998-99.

For this same time-period, local programs provided the following services to victims.

Number of Services to Victims Fiscal Year 1998-99	
Hotline Calls	9,300
Crisis Counseling	9,400
Safe Housing	2,700
Transportation Costs	4,800

Administration and Monitoring of Grants

Assessment of the state Domestic Violence Program's operations included an evaluation of the procedures and processes used by the department to solicit and award grants to local domestic violence programs. In addition, we evaluated the department's method for administering and monitoring the awarded grants.

The following are the findings of completed audit work:

- Overall, the solicitation, award, and data-gathering activities completed by the state Domestic Violence Program appear *sufficient to meet the needs of the program*.
- Comparison of two statutes (Battered Spouses Grant Programs and Partner and Family Member Assault Intervention and Treatment Fund Account) associated with the Domestic Violence Program found grants made to the Coalition do not comply with statutes.

We recommend the department ensure compliance with statutory requirements when awarding domestic violence grants.

- During the application and award processes the department does not differentiate between the two statutes to consider eligibility or use criteria.

We recommend the department either: develop rules and administrative procedures that comply with both statutes; or seek amendments that incorporate eligibility and use criteria of both statutes.

- Licensure requirements designed to protect staff and clients of domestic violence shelters are not met by most shelters.

We recommend the department: examine current rules to ensure the safety and health requirements meet the needs of the Domestic Violence Program; and ensure the shelters meet the requirements as defined in rules.

- General liability insurance is required by the grant contract; however, most program directors interviewed indicate confusion with the requirement. Some local programs have dropped coverage; other local programs have purchased more than general liability coverage to comply with the grant contract.

We recommend the department review contract wording relating to insurance requirements to ensure the requirements accurately reflect the needs of the Domestic Violence Program.

- We found a need for additional monitoring of grant recipients.* Active monitoring helps grant recipients achieve goals and objectives, meet deadlines, stay within established budgets, maintain records, meet reporting requirements, and communicate project results. Examples of monitoring procedures include:

- < Ensuring local programs provide support documentation,
- < Ensuring site visits are completed, and
- < Completing periodic reviews of grant files.

These procedures would help provide a minimum level of department oversight of the operations of the funded programs. *We recommend the department develop monitoring procedures to ensure local programs submit appropriate documentation and funded programs comply with federal and state requirements.*

For a complete copy of the report (00P-15) or for further information contact the Legislative Audit Division at 406-444-3122; e-mail to lad@mt.gov; or check the web site at <http://leg.mt.gov/audit>.