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9/11/02



**MARY BYRON
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**"Celebrating Solutions"
Nomination Form**

Legal Name of Organization STEPS TO END FAMILY VIOLENCE

A Program of EGSCF

Address 1968 2nd Avenue, 2nd Floor

City/State/Zip New York, NY 10029

Contact Person Sister Mary Nerney

Title Director

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Description of organization STEPS to End Family Violence works to improve the quality of life for survivors of domestic violence who have been arrested and/or imprisoned for defending themselves or their children from their abuser. We provide crisis intervention, individual clinical counseling, counseling for children, domestic violence education, support groups, job readiness training, information, referrals and legal advocacy to over 250 abused women and 75 children each year. We also provide community outreach by hosting between two to five workshops each month. Ultimately, our goal is to liberate these women and children from their victimization by teaching them skills for self-sufficiency and break the cycle of intergenerational patterns of abuse.

Geographical area served New York City

Is organization tax-exempt under IRS 501 (c) (3) guidelines? yes no

If no, is your organization a public agency/unit of government? yes no

Signature of contact person Mary Nerney

Date September 6, 2002

Please send Program Outline with Nomination Form to:

Mary Byron Foundation, Inc.
10401 Linn Station Road, Suite 200
Louisville, KY 40223-3842

Or email us at: grants@marybyronfoundation.org

STEPS To End Family Violence

PROGRAM OUTLINE

STEPS MISSION

STEPS to End Family Violence works to improve the quality of life for victims of domestic violence, who have been arrested and/or imprisoned for retaliating against their abuser. Through our programs at STEPS we uphold the following objectives:

- The protection of victims of domestic violence, including their children
- The prevention of incarceration for victims of domestic violence
- The promotion of healing through strength building strategies
- The preservation of family
- The preclusion of intergenerational abuse cycles
- The promise of social justice in the treatment of victims of domestic violence

The ultimate benefit of our work is to improve the psychological and sociological circumstances of our clients who are victims of domestic violence.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING

STEPS accomplishes our goal of liberating these survivors of domestic violence from their victimization through four programs:

- ***Alternatives to Incarceration Program (ATI)***
- ***Stepping Stones to Success Program***
- ***Children's Therapy Program***
- ***Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP) & Using Non-Violence In Teen Decisions (UNITED)***

For sixteen years, *ATI* has been the only program in New York City working with domestic violence survivors who have been arrested and/or imprisoned for retaliating against their abuser. Upon the woman's arrest and/or imprisonment, STEPS is notified of the case through our extensive collaboration with agencies, attorneys and the women and staff at Rikers Island. *ATI* counselors meet with the woman either in jail or at our East Harlem facility and perform extensive psychosocial evaluations. Following assessment, our court-advocate counselors offer the client an alternative to imprisonment through writing letters or psychosocial reports to the courts and exposing documented or undocumented histories of abuse that may otherwise have been overlooked in their cases and presenting this in court. We provide the woman with individual clinical counseling, accompany her to all court proceedings, assist with child custody, visitation, divorce, safety and monetary issues. Typically, our work with each individual spans from six-months to a year yet we have clients who are with us much longer. Primary interest is always given to the clients' safety and in crisis circumstances, they are assisted with safety planning in obtaining orders of protection and securing safe havens for them and their children.

Through our client advocacy we are successful in having charges either dropped or significantly reduced in 85-90% of our cases. Through our outreach advocacy we effect change in the treatment of battered women with education of attorneys, judges and the general public. Once a client's crisis matters are resolved, she begins participating in a variety of educational counseling curriculum such as "New Beginnings," "Understanding Your Anger," and "Self-esteem to Empowerment." Ongoing individual clinical counseling and support groups also accompany the curriculum.

- *Individual Clinical Counseling* – Counselors establish both short-term and long-term treatment goals with their clients. Individual counseling focuses primarily on issues of self-esteem, post-traumatic stress, depression, anger, safety and the recovery process. Through discussing the abusive relationship and the dynamics of the relationships with their children, their parents and past intimate partners the victims of domestic violence develop a greater sense of self-worth and self-sufficiency.

- *New Beginnings* - Attendance of this 10-week educational group counseling session is required of all clients in STEPS. They receive education on such issues as defining and identifying abuse, discussions of power and control, safety planning and protection, common characteristics of abusive personalities, effects of domestic violence on children, and fostering positive self-esteem. Each session is approximately 1-1/2 hours and is designed to prepare the victims of domestic violence for on-going group counseling programs.

- *Understanding Your Anger* - This 10-week counseling program is aimed at helping victims of domestic violence understand and manage their feelings of anger in a healthy, positive manner. Education is provided on such issues as self-assessment, anger triggers, expressions of anger and conflict resolution. Each session is approximately 1-1/2 hours.

- *Self-esteem to Empowerment* - An 8-week creative support group is designed to empower victims of domestic violence through creative expression, support and education. Each session lasts approximately 1-1/2 hours and is structured to define and explore the client's self-esteem, and teach her empowerment. Community guest speakers and activities, which develop self-esteem, are part of this program.

Stepping Stones to Success is a 6-8 week job training and placement program that is designed to assist victims of domestic violence, who have been recently released from imprisonment obtain self-sufficiency and reunification with their children. Program graduates achieve economic independence through job placement and become independent of TANF (welfare.) In-house referrals are coupled with off-site internships, vocational training, and a general education equivalency diploma. All clients are eligible to attend the following counseling sessions to prepare them for self-sufficiency: "Job Readiness," "Home & Work," and "Reunification."

- *Job Readiness* - Self-assessment counseling, assistance with resume writing, filling out applications, strategies for marketing themselves and interview follow-ups are all covered. We provide computer-training seminars and develop a job search plan. Support continues to ensure progress, and counseling and advocacy is offered as needed. Guest speakers and presentations

are included and offer pertinent industry information. Each session is approximately 1-1/2 hours and has assisted numerous clients in becoming and remaining employed.

- *Home & Work* – The objective here is to assist the victim of domestic violence in achieving harmony between their home and work. During the 12 sessions, they explore the obstacles that can impede a balanced life and work to develop skills that appropriately manage time. At the end of the course there is a written test to determine the clients level of control and a weekly time-management schedule is developed to assist them in establishing a routine.

- *Reunification* – This provides individual counseling for parent and child to become reunited following the clients' release from incarceration or arrest. The sessions are designed to build trust between the two and are sometimes held with former caretakers as well as the parents.

The ***Children's Therapy Program*** has a mission to nurture children between the ages of 2 and 14 who have been exposed to domestic violence and educate practitioners on the issues related to children who have lived in violent households. If intervention is not in place, children who have been exposed to domestic violence have a much higher probability of repeating the behaviors of their abusive parents and are at an increased risk of becoming victim to such things as; drugs, gang involvement, running away, truancy, suicidal thoughts and unprotected or promiscuous sex. For this reason, we work directly with children and the non-abusive caregivers in a therapeutic setting, as well as offering education to professionals about the issues surrounding children exposed to domestic violence.

The program now services 75 children and 75 parents for a total of 150 clients. We utilize different models depending on the needs of the child, parent or caregiver. Cognitive behavioral therapy, play therapy, interactive therapy, art therapy, role-playing, writing and talk therapy are all used interchangeably. We are continuously developing new forums for the children and their parents and cases are repeatedly assessed to determine what is most effective for each child. Safety of the child is always the primary consideration when delivering therapeutic services to the children, parents or caregivers. We also provide a parenting education counseling series, which emphasizes parenting skills when domestic violence is involved. Major Children's Therapy Components are:

- Enrollment and psychological assessment of children and families.
- Individual counseling, children's groups and therapeutic child care coordination.
- Parent education focusing on domestic violence issues.
- Parent and child family interactive therapy.
- Training on post-traumatic stress disorder and child abuse to staff and others.

Our children are from low income, under-served families, whose mothers are participating in either our ATI or Stepping Stones to Success programs or they have been referred to us through child welfare, ACS, family court or other domestic violence related agencies.

Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP) and Using Non-Violence In Teen Decisions Program (UNITED) – Chosen as the model for New York City's *Adopt-A-School Program* by Mayor Giuliani, the RAPP program raises awareness and provides intervention and prevention counseling to teenagers regarding abusive relationships. Our program coordinator is one of the experts in teen abuse in the city of New York.

RAPP is implemented in twenty New York City high schools of which, STEPS coordinates four; Brandeis H.S., Manhattan Center for Science & Math, Stevenson H.S. and Wingate H.S. In each school a coordinator works on school premises to provide individual and group counseling, educational classes, workshops, peer leadership training and to facilitate special school events for over 2,000 New York City teens. The programs aim is to identify intervention strategies such as safety planning and prevention of abusive relationships. These strategies work to educate teenagers from entering into abusive relationships as adults.

The *UNITED* program is geared specifically for teenagers – both for males who have shown signs of violence towards their girlfriends, and in planning but not yet operating for females who are in need of personal safety counseling. The programs’ aim is to hold young men accountable for their abusive behavior now and in the future by helping them to understand how damaging their behavior is to them, their partners and families. Soon to be implemented, young women will be offered counseling in personal safety and taught how to identify traits of abusive personalities. A 26-week curriculum is developed to meet the goals of the program and is administered at the school.

The ultimate benefit of our counseling curriculum for youth is improved attitudes and behaviors of our participants. This is a fundamental step in the process of developing these vulnerable children into healthy, responsible adults and law-abiding citizens who do not repeat cycles of abuse.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Before 1985 domestic violence victims were encouraged to remain silent about the abuse that they endured, even if it meant going to prison. Because of the stigma attached to domestic violence, there were numerous barriers to overcome when educating the courts and in finding sources of financial support for our program.

More recently a barrier that we have broken is having teen abuse acknowledged and intervention strategies placed in high schools. STEPS created a program curriculum, which was subsequently used by New York City as a model for a city wide high school program that addresses the issue of violence in teen relationships.

PROGRAM SUCCESS

Cathy was involved in an abusive relationship for over five years. She endured severe physical and emotional abuse from her live-in partner, who was also the father of her children. As a result of the abuse, Cathy reached a point where she “lost control” and was arrested and incarcerated. She could have spent two to four years in prison, however spent one year at Rikers Island in large part due to the advocacy of the ATI program court advocates who assisted Cathy in the court process. Since Cathys’ release she has been attending individual counseling as well as participating in our domestic violence educational counseling workshops. She will continue to participate in our program for at least six months. Had Cathy remained incarcerated, it would have cost the city approximately \$11,166 for the two-month period that she has been released and participating in STEPS. For Cathys’ participation in STEPS, it has cost the only \$1,447.

STEPS has also been successful in obtaining clemency in the case of Charline Brundidge, the first battered woman in New York State to receive clemency. Charlene had served out ten years of her fifteen-year to life sentence. In her case, we were able to reduce her charge by at least five years, thus saving the state a minimum of \$190,000.

STEPS is currently collaborating with the New York Academy of Medicine in designing a study to assess the role of domestic violence in determining the mental health of women serviced by STEPS programs. We are also participating in a research project with the Columbia University School of Social Work, which focuses on our Children's Therapy Program. The results of this research will enable us to better define issues relating to domestic violence in the first years of a child's life, from newborn to age six. Both studies will assist us in our continuing pledge to STEPS programming refinement.

Our unique programs have been honored through numerous awards. In 1990 and again in 1999, STEPS received "*outstanding commitment to providing services to victims of domestic violence*" from the *New York City Human Resources Administration*. In 1996, STEPS was awarded the *International Archon Award* for collaborative and innovative work leading to a new direction in health care. In 2001, *Healthlink* (a division of Hunter College) acknowledged STEPS for our outstanding work.

As a result of STEPS work with children and teens the following outcomes have been documented:

- improved school grades
- more frequent interaction with parents
- better following of directions
- making friends
- inviting friends home
- more involvement in after school activities
- a decreased number of negative written and verbal reports from teachers

KEY PARTNERS

The Coalition for Women Prisoners – provides advocacy

Criminal Justice Agency – provides statistics

New York State Division of Probation and Correction Alternatives – provides funding

New York City office of Criminal Justice Coordinator – provides funding

New York City Human Resources Administration – provides funding

New York City Council – provides funding

PROGRAM REPLICATION

STEPS programs can and should be used as a program model in other areas of the country primarily because we have a successful record of having charges either dropped or significantly reduced in 85-90% of our cases. This allows women to remain free and an active mother for their children, subsequently saving the city \$69,000 or state \$38,000 per year for the incarceration of one individual - not to mention the cost of foster care for a child, which ranges from \$20,000 to \$90,000 depending on the child's needs.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. What curriculum is used in your children's therapy program? Did you develop it yourself? The Children's Therapy Program uses a combination of therapeutic methods to heal and empower youth who have been exposed to domestic violence. Our children, ages 2-14, work in age-appropriate groups and individually with their non-abusive parents to develop their emotional competencies and coping skills to carry them through adolescence and into adulthood. Groups run in 6-10 week cycles, consist of 8-12 children each and are 1-1/2 hours in length. Our curriculum serves as a model for the *Children's Programming Manual For Domestic Violence Service Providers*, which is used by other agencies to enhance or develop children's programming that relates to domestic violence.

Enrollment – Child and non-abusive parent meet individually with counselor for psychosocial assessment and together where interactions between the two are observed. Counselor also visits schools to collaborate with teachers and school counselors. Based on data analysis and the child's age, an individual therapy curriculum is devised and implemented. Length of participation varies for each child but typically averages from 8-10 months.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – Children work one-on-one with counselor in learning to deal with stress inducing situations in adaptive ways. For example, school aged children are taught to view and work on assignments in manageable blocks rather than as a massive project.

Art Expressions Therapy – Since children often have difficulty with verbal expression, art therapy allows for emotional expression and healing through nonverbal means. In separate sessions, children use their imaginations to create projects such as paintings and masks. Once finished, the counselor plays games with the group, using the art projects to express feelings too difficult to talk about and to provide an avenue for communication.

Role-Playing – Counselor leads child and non-abusive parent in "situational plays" to enact potential stressful situations and offers alternative ways of coping.

Talk Therapy – For older children, we begin with board games or another type of interactive project that opens them to a "feeling level" discussion of the abuse that they have experienced.

Play Therapy – For younger children, we work through the introduction of puppets, toys, and games where they can talk about painful and difficult times of abuse without feeling the pressure of disclosure.

Parent Support Groups – Parents are offered the opportunity to understand how domestic violence has impacted them and their children, and supports them while they are going through the crisis of reorganizing their family life.

2. Do you conduct home visits? We conduct home visits in certain situations, but not with every child who enters into the Children's Therapy Program. Several reasons that can prompt us to visit the child's home environment are: if there is concern about continuing child abuse or safety of the child, if there are discrepancies at the time of enrollment between the mother's and child's description of the home environment, or if a report has been filed with the State Central Registry.

School visits are a regular, ongoing part of our program, first upon enrollment in the program and thereafter on a periodic basis depending on assessment of each child.

3. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your program with children? A key element that is used to monitor the child's participation and progress in the Children's Therapy Program includes a case log where intake/enrollment and session notes are recorded following each meeting. Additionally, through our regular school visits we are able to speak with teachers and counselors and monitor progress in attitude, participation, grades and socialization. Participation in after school activities is also monitored through meetings with teachers, the child and non-abusive parent. A final exit analysis is written upon completion of the program, which compares child's status at enrollment to the status upon completing the program.

4. How long has this component of your program been operational? The Children's Therapy Program began in 1991 and is now in our twelfth year of operation. The idea to create the program initially grew from STEPS work with arrested and/or imprisoned women who are victims of domestic violence and recognizing that their children experience a great deal of psychosocial and developmental disorders as a result of being exposed to domestic violence.

Our program curriculum was developed by Sister Mary Nerney, STEPS Founder and Program Director, who is a trained Psychologist, holds a Professional Diploma in Psychology, a fellowship in Special Education and a BS degree in Education. Throughout Sister Mary's thirty plus years of experience in working with poor, underserved communities of New York City she has earned a reputation for establishing innovative, successful programming with a continuing commitment to STEPS program refinement. As part of the Children's Therapy Program curriculum, Sister Mary and the STEPS staff regularly attend conferences to educate practitioners on issues related to children who have lived with domestic violence and to gain expertise & knowledge about other successful programs throughout the country.

5. Other than the NY City Council, does STEPS receive any other funding? STEPS 2002-2003 budget of \$1,032,670 is comprised of the following: \$304,979 from New York State Division of Probation & Correction Alternatives, \$245,691 from New York City office of Criminal Justice Coordinator, \$265,000 from New York City Human Resources Administration, \$50,500 from New York City Council, \$24,500 from Philip Morris Foundation, \$10,000 from the Lincoln Fund, \$7,000 from Campaign for Human Development, \$5,000 from the Tides Foundation and \$120,000 from individual donors and other fundraising efforts.

6. How many staff are employed? Are any volunteers used? STEPS employees 17 full time employees and 3 part-time employees as follows: 1 STEPS Director, 1 STEPS Legal Coordinator, 1 ATI Coordinator, 3 ATI Court-Advocate Counselors, 1 Children's Therapy Coordinator, 1 Stepping Stones to Success Coordinator, 1 Stepping Stones Job Coach, 2 Stepping Stones Case Managers, 1 RAPP/UNITED Coordinator, 4 RAPP School Counselors and 1 Administrative Assistant, all of which are full-time employees. Part-time employees include: 1 Computer Technician, 1 Stepping Stones Policy Analyst and 1 UNITED Facilitator.

Currently, STEPS has 5 MSW interns working on a volunteer basis, of which 2 work directly with the Children's Therapy Program providing therapeutic child-care. We also have 2 volunteer STEPS clients who assist in the office and a 13 member Advisory Board who assist in our fundraising. The number of volunteers is scheduled to increase in the up-coming year.