



BATTERED WOMEN'S SERVICES AND SHELTER

P.O. Box 652, Barre, VT 05641

24-Hour Toll Free Hotline 1-877-543-9498



September 20, 2010

Town of Waitsfield, Vermont
Select Board
9 Bridge Street
Waitsfield, VT 05673

Dear Select Board,

Battered Women's Services and Shelter (BWSS) is requesting \$350 for FY11 from the Town of Waitsfield in support of the work that we do for victims of domestic violence. Enclosed with our request you will find our statistical information from Fiscal Year 2010.

BWSS is a small, community based organization dedicated to ending all forms of domestic violence. BWSS provides services to all victims of domestic violence, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity. BWSS has always provided these necessary services at no cost, which is why we greatly depend on and truly appreciate the continued support from the community that we serve.

We ask that the taxpayers of your town be notified of our request so that they may choose to support the services that BWSS provides. We at Battered Women's Services and Shelter ask that this request be included in the warning for the next Town Meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact our administrative office at (802)-476-6010 or email bwss@sover.net.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Baker
Direct Service Coordinator
Battered Women's Services and Shelter

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This has been a year of transformation for Battered Women's Services and Shelter (BWSS). One of the biggest changes our organization experienced this year was the undertaking of a name change project! Twenty-nine years after opening its doors, BWSS has come to a turning point in our work within the domestic violence movement; one that encourages long-term solutions through increased community involvement and greater prevention measures. While our name added strength and definition to our work in the beginning and has served us well, it is time to guide the movement in a new direction, one that is not fear-based, but based in non-violence and healthy choices. BWSS is excited and inspired by the new directions that the battered women's movement is taking. Our work as advocates is becoming more focused on prevention, increasingly pro-active, and wider in scope. Throughout fiscal year 2010, BWSS advocates were kept extremely busy providing the following services:

- Over the past year, staff and volunteer advocates responded to 4,123 hot line calls, an average of 343 calls per month.
- Shelter services were provided to 31 women and 25 children for a total of 1,958 bed nights, an increase of almost 50% in bed nights from the previous year.
- Our prevention based programs in schools reached a total of 1,842 students in Washington County through the 101 presentations and support groups held during this fiscal year. BWSS was able to reach 10% more students than last year and worked with 3 new schools.
- BWSS provided community presentations to 610 people through the 27 presentations offered to individuals and professionals in Washington County.
- Advocates provided support to 125 plaintiffs during Final Relief from Abuse Hearings, and assisted 119 individuals file for temporary orders.
- Court Education Program was presented to 262 individuals, and our Court Hour Program, which offers one-on-one support to plaintiffs as they prepare for their final hearings, was offered to 64 individuals.
- Over 1,500 people received direct services from BWSS, which are maintained by trained staff and volunteer advocates.
- BWSS offered numerous evening support groups, reaching a total of 16 women. This evening group was also able to offer childcare to 7 children of the participants.
- Our organization continues to rely heavily on the vast support of our Board Members and hotline, shelter, and community events volunteer advocates. Our 18 dedicated and generous volunteers contributed 6,502 hours to the work of BWSS.

Our services include:

- SHELTER: Emergency Shelter for women and children fleeing from domestic abuse
- SHELTER YOUTH PROGRAM: Available to children staying in shelter
- TOLL FREE CONFIDENTIAL 24-HOUR HOT LINE (1-877-543-9498)
- EMERGENCY, CIVIL and CRIMINAL COURT ADVOCACY
- SUPPORT GROUPS
- PREVENTION EDUCATION OFFERED TO SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT WASHINGTON COUNTY
- EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS: offered to civic organizations and businesses.
- INFORMATION AND REFERRAL: information about domestic violence and community resources, as well as individualized advocacy and referral to social service, legal, employment, counseling, and housing options.

BATTERED WOMEN'S SERVICES AND SHELTER DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

CRISIS HOTLINE (1-877-543-9498)

Staff and trained volunteer advocates maintain a 24-hour toll-free hotline to offer support, intervention, and information for victims of domestic violence in Washington County. Referrals to other service providers are offered when requested.

SHELTER

BWSS provides a safe, confidential living space in Washington County for women and their children fleeing abusive situations. Shelter staff offers emotional support, resources and education about healthy relationships for residents while working with them plan for a future free from abuse. Staff is dedicated to assisting residents with basic needs such as: establishing residence in the community, obtaining food and clothing, securing employment and/or job training, understanding financial literacy, applying for financial assistance, and connecting women with family support services, health services, and mental health counseling.

COURT

Staff is available to assist women at anytime of the day or night in applying for Abuse Protection Orders with Washington County Family Court. They offer assistance in preparing for their Final Orders and are present at Final Hearings in abuse cases. The staff also provides ongoing support and resources for victims if their partners are involved in the criminal court process. We support women through other Family Court proceedings and/or refer them to other legal resources.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups are offered weekly for women who have been or currently are involved in an abusive relationship. The groups are facilitated by BWSS staff and/or Volunteer Advocates in a confidential location. Women learn about the dynamics of domestic violence, the attributes of a healthy relationship, the effects of domestic violence on children and other topics of concern. BWSS offers these groups throughout Washington County.

SCHOOLS PROGRAMS

BWSS Staff brings programs designed to define healthy relationships, to identify the red flags of unhealthy relationships and to teach helpful and safe interventions for bystanders to dating violence in middle schools, high schools and colleges throughout Washington County Schools. Staff also provides education about bullying, consent and gender stereotyping to these students. BWSS also provides 10-week support and education groups for young men and young women who might benefit from ongoing assistance and encouragement.

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

BWSS staff is available to present workshops about the dynamics of domestic violence, about the effects of domestic violence on children, and about our agency services and responses to domestic violence throughout Washington County. Staff presents at organizations, businesses, school staffs, other agencies and conferences.