

A Proposal for a Community Organization LEVEL 4

A

A Proposal to Establish A Community Organization

Domestic violence is a major problem in many places of the world, however it tends to be kept behind closed doors. Most of the time the women and children who are being abused in their homes do not seek out help for many reasons, including no place to go and fear of being killed by the husband. We are proposing to establish a Refuge for Domestic Violence Victims (RDVV) in our town. RDVV will provide a place for women and children to escape domestic violence and stay until they have a chance to get back on their own feet. It will also teach these women and children that domestic violence is not acceptable and that they do not deserve this kind of treatment, encouraging them to avoid relationships in which they are abused. This will help break this cycle of violence.

Domestic violence can be attributed to many different factors. From an anthropological perspective, domestic violence stems from ancient times. Accounts and descriptions of women often emphasize the appropriateness of blaming and punishing women for transgressions. For example, in the Garden of Eden, it was Eve who was blamed for eating the forbidden fruit. For centuries, women everywhere have occupied a lower status than men. At one point women, like cattle, were considered a man's possession, their purpose being that of having children and taking care of their husbands. Men have, in the past, been legally allowed to "physically chastise" a disobedient wife as long as the stick used was no thicker than his thumb, hence the "rule of thumb". Men have historically dominated the social order, as well as the family structure, and much of this is due to the fact that "economic and social circumstances operate both directly and indirectly to support a male" (Latts, 1997, p.503). Men have been responsible for earning and controlling the finances for the family, which gives them a lot of power and authority over their wives and children. For some men, this masculine role is something they feel they still have to fulfill in today's society. However, some men take this control too far by abusing their wives and children. Most of the messages portrayed in the media, that have become part of the Canadian culture, imply that men should not show emotion or be sensitive, but rather be strong, aggressive and in control. This, along with a long history of the man being the head of the household and "owning" their wives and children, influence men today and is the root of domestic violence.

Another view on domestic violence is the sociological perspective. Men learn to be aggressive from their role models as children. Most men who grow up to be abusers often come from abusive families, are socialized to be aggressive and competitive, and learn that emotions are not to be expressed by "real" men. Thus, they do not know how to properly express their emotions. "Abusive men learned when all other sources of masculine identity fail, they can rely on being tough as a sign of manliness" (Latts, 1997, p.503). On the other hand, women in the past have been raised to be passive, accepting and subservient to men, and these characteristics are typical of women who are more likely to enter an abusive relationship. Many women who are in abusive relationships have been taught to be accommodating and frequently have trouble enforcing personal boundaries. They have often grown up in a family environment of isolation, violence and dependence. As a result, they find themselves in abusive relationships they cannot get out of, physically or emotionally. Most of the time domestic violence is thought of as a family secret and something that is never talked about. It happens behind closed doors and remains there. Women in these situations do not run away but stay because they are so dependent, feeling that they need the financial support of their husbands.

B

From a psychological perspective, an abused woman sees herself as helpless, powerless, unworthy and unimportant. She has developed a poor self-image based on feelings of embarrassment, fear, guilt, humiliation and intimidation. Abused woman may find it difficult to consider leaving an abusive relationship because of previous experience with violence and societal pressures to be submissive. Little self-assertion and internalized feelings of helplessness also characterize an abused woman (Latts, 1997, p.505). Some women feel that they deserve the abuse they receive. Abuse convinces them that they are incompetent and that they are unable to control what happens to them including the events that may bring on the abuse. On top of all these negative feelings about themselves, an abused woman also feels trapped in the abusive relationship and fears for her life if she were to try and end the relationship (Jones, 1994). Above all, if she tries to escape, where will she go?

The initial focus of our organization is to establish a refuge for these women and their children in _____. We are asking for your support to make this a reality. The refuge we propose will house up to 100 women and children each day. We will provide a safe and supportive refuge where women and children can be provided for. Food, clothing and medical assistance will be provided by volunteers. Each woman will be permitted to stay for as long as necessary for her to get back on her own feet, for up to approximately six months. RDVV realizes that some women may require more time than others, while some women may only wish to stay for a night or two, and accommodations will be made, depending on individual circumstances. During their stay, each woman will be taught, through daily activities, that spousal abuse is not acceptable and that women are not to blame for their victimization. RDVV has approached several social workers and psychologists who are willing to donate their time to this project. Counselling services will be available on an on-going basis. For women who require it, assistance will be provided in job searches and financial management. Everything possible will be done to raise the self-esteem of these women. RDVV will conduct a follow-up program to help these women through their "recovery" and support them in avoiding future abusive relationships. The refuge will provide immediate assistance to hundreds of individual women and children in this community each year.

Although RDVV plans to concentrate on short-term goals initially, we believe that there will be long-term benefits for the entire community from our proposed project. Through education, we believe that we can help break the cycle of domestic violence. By working with the abused women who come to us, we believe that we can help them to avoid abusive relationships in the future. This will enable them to bring up their own children with new insights. Spreading the word about domestic violence and making people more aware of it, will be key to preventing such abuse and is our main long-term goal.

We hope that you will support us.

Refuge for Domestic Violence Victims Committee

Bibliography

Latts, 1997
Jones, 1994

Teacher's Notes**Knowledge/Understanding**

- The student identifies the problem of domestic violence and describes it with a high degree of accuracy, pointing out that “it tends to be kept behind closed doors” and giving reasons why this is the case (e.g., “Most of the time the women and children who are being abused in their homes do not seek out help for many reasons, including no place to go and fear of being killed by the husband.”).
- The student describes the organization being proposed to address the problem with a high degree of clarity. In addition to a succinct overview of the organization (“RDVV [Refuge for Domestic Violence Victims] will provide a place for women and children to escape domestic violence and stay until they have a chance to get back on their own feet. It will also teach these women and children that domestic violence is not acceptable . . .”), the student provides many specific details concerning its operations: for example, the number of women and children accommodated, the assistance they will receive, the length of stay, and the professional expertise available.

Thinking/Inquiry

- The student assesses the influence of the social forces involved with a high degree of accuracy, as illustrated by the following:
 - a) The student successfully links the long history of women’s subordination to men, and the power inherent in traditional male roles, with the abuse of women in today’s society (e.g., “Men have historically dominated the social order, as well as the family structure . . . For some men, this masculine role is something they feel they still have to fulfill . . . However, some men take this control too far . . .”). (Anthropology)
 - b) The student recognizes that the different ways in which men and women are socialized create characteristics in both men and women that contribute to or help to perpetuate domestic violence. On the one hand, “Most men who grow up to be abusers often come from abusive families, are socialized to be aggressive and competitive, and learn that emotions

are not to be expressed by ‘real’ men”; on the other hand, “women in the past have been raised to be passive, accepting and subservient to men, and these characteristics are typical of women who are more likely to enter an abusive relationship.” (Sociology)

- c) The student provides a sensitive analysis of the psychological factors involved, in particular the way in which a sense of helplessness and a poor self-image can lead some women to feel that “they deserve the abuse they receive . . . and that they are unable to control what happens to them including the events that may bring on the abuse”. (Psychology)

Communication

- The student justifies the formation of a “Refuge for Domestic Violence Victims” with a high degree of effectiveness. The proposal indicates that a good deal of thought has been given to the needs of the women coming to the shelter, and demonstrates an awareness that these needs will vary. Moreover, by articulating long- and short-term goals for the proposed organization (e.g., initially the organization will provide a shelter for women and children who need immediate sanctuary, but steps will also be taken to help break the cycle of abuse), the student signals the organization’s commitment to helping create a better society.
- The student’s use of social science terminology is very rich and highly accurate (e.g., “cycle of violence”, “lower status”, “role models”, “personal boundaries”, “societal pressures”, “self-assertion”).

Application

- The student makes highly appropriate and insightful predictions about the impact of the organization on the community, pointing out that helping women avoid abusive relationships will also benefit their children and that bringing the issue into the open “will be key” to finding a long-term solution: “Through education, we believe that we can help break the cycle of domestic violence.”

LEVEL 4

Comments

This work is representative of a solid level-4 performance. The student demonstrates a high degree of achievement of the expectations in all categories of knowledge and skills.

The result is an excellent and well-organized proposal.

Next Steps

In order to improve his or her performance, the student could consider including some mention of how such an enormous undertaking could actually be implemented.