

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REPORT™

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Hidden Victims and Hidden Abuse: Clients of Hair Salons

by D. Kelly Weisberg

Hairstylists are receiving education on domestic violence in recognition of the fact that these professionals offer hope of increasing the disclosure of intimate partner violence. Through a domestic violence prevention effort sponsored by the Professional Beauty Association (PBA) called “Cut It Out,” hair salons across the country are training hair stylists to recognize the signs of domestic abuse.

Beauty salons are an ideal venue for this public education effort because clients often establish a close relationship with the stylists who cut and sometimes highlight their hair. Customers are surprisingly likely to disclose intimate details of their lives to these professionals whom they may have known for many years and with whom they spend considerable time. Other facts also facilitate disclosure of such private information: Hairstylists often have excellent listening skills and are interested in their clients’ lives. In addition, the hair salon is generally an all-female location with a “home-like” atmosphere that is conducive to sharing life experiences.

Moreover, due to the nature of their work, hairstylists are in a unique position to discover domestic abuse. They are likely to observe the signs of abuse that others might miss, such as

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Intimate Partner Homicide Suicide in Later Life: Understanding Motives and Risks

by Sonia Salari

After being friends for two years, Ellen (age 79) decided to end her relationship with Otis (age 83). When she refused to let him in her home any longer, he brought a firearm to the scene and neighbors reported hearing gunshots. Police arrived and set up a SWAT response, hoping to find a hostage situation, but instead found a murder-suicide.

Neighbors described the victim as an active member of their community. She was a vibrant, talkative woman who had an optimistic outlook. One explained the two “had been having fun, going out with each other, going to garage sales, just to have a good time ... That’s

what it was to her. Evidently to him it was something else.” Similar to younger couples, relationship estrangement is one reason for intimate partner homicide suicide in later life. A more common scenario in this age group involves the intact relationship where the elderly husband is suicidal and decides to include his unsuspecting partner in his violent end. His perspective considers his own feelings and fails to recognize the autonomy of his victim. This dyadic overdependence projects a fear of separation and denies her right to live beyond his life span.

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About This Issue . . .

We are pleased to present this special issue of **Domestic Violence Report** that is devoted to the topic of “Hidden Victims of Intimate Partner Violence.” Because domestic violence largely occurs in private, the abuse is often hidden from the outside world. Victims suffer in silence because they are reluctant to disclose the abuse for a myriad of reasons. This special issue of **DVR** focuses on some victims who are most difficult to see—such as transgender survivors, prostitutes, victims of sex trafficking, and the elderly. It thereby attempts to shed light on aspects of the problem that have been shrouded in secrecy for far too long.

D. Kelly Weisberg, Editor, **DVR**

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bruises on the scalp or places on the scalp where the abuser has pulled out chunks of hair.

Cut it Out was originally created in Alabama in 2002 by the Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham and the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In its first year, the program trained more than 500 state salon professionals. The following year, Cut it Out launched a national effort after a partnership was formed among the

National Cosmetology Association (NCA), Clairol Professional, and the Grants Allocation Chair and Founder and Director of Southern Living at Home. When the National Cosmetology Association merged with the Professional Beauty Association in 2010, the PBA took over the Cut It Out program. The program became the national arm of the Salons Against Domestic Abuse Fund, with the mission of training salon professionals to fight the epidemic of domestic violence in communities across the country.

Participants in Cut It Out learn to spot signs of domestic violence. The program teaches stylists the appropriate role to take in situations when they discover that their clients are victims of domestic violence. It teaches them not to become a counselor and tell the client what to do. Rather, stylists should merely provide resources to clients and refer them to local community service providers, such as domestic violence service agencies as well as

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domestic violence officers from local police departments. The program also encourages stylists to provide clients with contact information for local domestic violence organizations and the National Domestic Violence Hotline on small safety cards that can be hidden easily from abusive partners.

One particularly innovative public-private partnership was started in Middlesex County, in Belmont, Massachusetts, by District Attorney Marian Ryan who developed a Cut it Out program with community partners. In 2009, Middlesex County initiated the first stage of its training program at one local vocational and technical high school to create awareness around the issue of domestic violence early in its students’ professional development. In the second stage of the program, the district attorney’s office launched more widespread trainings by partnering with a national beauty school chain, Empire Beauty School. The partners conducted domestic violence awareness training at Empire campuses in Lowell, Framingham, and Malden, Massachusetts.

In 2015, in the third stage, the program conducted trainings for stylists and salon professionals throughout Middlesex County. Middlesex County comprises about one-quarter of the population of the state, and includes Ayer, Cambridge, Concord, Framingham, Lowell, Malden, Marlborough, Natick, Newton, Somerville, Waltham, and Woburn. Also during the third stage, cosmetology students provided free services (cut hair and performed manicures) to nine survivors of domestic violence from shelter programs in Concord and Somerville.

The Cut It Out program, first implemented in 2002 in Alabama, has since become the national program of the Salons Against Domestic Abuse Fund, which is dedicated to mobilizing salon professionals and others to recognize signs of abuse and to fight the epidemic of domestic violence in communities across the United States. The program is truly an innovative effort to discover hidden victims of intimate partner violence.

**D. Kelly Weisberg is editor of DVR and Professor of Law, Hastings College of the Law.* ■

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