

CRIME VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT



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**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
BUREAU OF CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION
SAN DIEGO SECTOR
CRIME VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT**

I. SYNOPSIS

Illegal immigrants and other unlawful permanent residents in our communities are often victims of domestic violence. In many instances they do not seek assistance because they are fearful of their perpetrators and/or our legal system. They fear being deported back to their home country because they do not understand the laws established to protect them. As a result, these individuals live in silent terror oppressed by their perpetrators who believe they are immune to legal consequences for their actions.

Initially the Border Patrol San Diego Sector created a Domestic Violence Unit set up to target immigrant perpetrators and remove them from the country. It was believed that removing the immigrant perpetrators would resolve the domestic violence problems. While focusing on the perpetrators helped in some cases, it was found that many perpetrators were United States citizens untouched by immigration laws. Moreover, many immigrant domestic violence perpetrators who were deported managed to return to the United States and continue the cycle of violence. Negative feedback from San Diego communities caused the San Diego Sector Border Patrol to re-think their approach, because removing perpetrators exacerbated other problems such as lack of financial support, housing, and family separation issues. Clearly a greater need was to help immigrant victims become educated and independent in order to break the cycle of violence in which they lived. Therefore the Border Patrol Crime Victim Assistance Unit (CVAU) was created in May 2000 to educate these victims who are terrorized by their perpetrators and do not trust the legal and immigration systems established to assist them.

The fundamental goal of the CVAU is to enhance the quality of life of immigrant victims of domestic violence through a partnership with state and local law enforcement along with professional and community-based organizations. By using the unique authority as immigration agents, the CVAU can ensure victims learn and take advantage of protection programs offered through the Violence Against Women Act and other immigration benefits to which they may be entitled. The CVAU is the first immigration law enforcement unit established nationwide whose function is to educate federal and local law enforcement agencies, advocacy groups and victims in our communities on immigration laws that protect victims of domestic violence. In order to be effective, it was necessary to dispel the belief that the Border Patrol was the "bad guy" and was only interested in removing illegal entrants from the United States. The CVAU has been able to accomplish this task by educating victims in the dynamics of domestic violence and their immigration rights. Utilizing tools to make sound decisions victims can change the situations and reduce the number of incidents of domestic violence and improve their quality of life.

The program evolved, as local law enforcement and advocacy groups became educated in the self-petitioning process and general immigration laws. Although this has been an ongoing

process, the CVAU was able to gain the trust of several advocacy groups and different immigrant communities around the San Diego County,. In addition, advertising our services in local community newspapers reached the victims themselves who were encouraged by the possibility of assistance without fear of deportation. When domestic violence victims learned they could self-petition to receive lawful immigration status, requests for assistance started coming in. While only four victims were assisted in the year 2000, by the end of year 2002 a total of 62 victims of domestic violence had sought help with the CVAU, of which 34 qualified to self-petition and gain lawful resident status. In the 9-month period from January through September of 2003 there have been an additional 82 requests for assistance and 32 of these victims have qualified for lawful resident status.

The CVAU helps victims who come forward by referring them to community agencies for temporary shelter, counseling, training, education, employment, and self-petitioning to become legal permanent residents. Many victims, whom we have assisted, have already gained emotional and financial independence. They have established themselves now and are proud productive members of our communities. The CVAU continues to be successful in breaking the cycle of domestic violence allowing victims and their children to gain independence and take advantage of new opportunities in a secure environment.

Additionally, recognizing the fact that domestic violence incidents are high within the law enforcement community, and that not all border patrol agents within the department are knowledgeable of domestic violence laws, the CVAU has developed and incorporated a comprehensive training program in issues of:

- Domestic Violence
- Lautenberg Provision
- Violence Against Women Act of 1994
- Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000
- Battered Immigrant Women
- Victim/Witness Awareness

II. INTRODUCTION

The San Diego Sector Border Patrol recognizes that local law enforcement agencies in San Diego County encounter many abused persons who are in the United States illegally. These persons are fearful of their abusers as well as the legal system. Many immigrants are unaware the U.S. Constitution and the legal systems within the United States are here to protect them. They are consistently being threatened by their spouse or abuser who tell them they will be deported by the Border Patrol if they seek help, this has been true for most victims encountered. A domestic violence victim's safety is of the utmost importance; therefore, the San Diego Sector Border Patrol created the Crime Victim Assistance Unit (CVAU) to help victims escape from the power and control of the perpetrator. The CVAU is distinct because it is the first law enforcement unit within the Border Patrol whose purpose is to educate and assist victims of crime. Using provisions of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), victims have exercised

their own power and control to escape domestic violence including serious crimes such as battery, sexual assault and incest.

Due to the high level of success achieved by the CVAU in San Diego, California, a national initiative to promote the CVAU program nationwide within the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection is encouraged. In the last three years, the CVAU has established solid relationships with several non-profit organizations, law enforcement agencies, government agencies, international organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based groups and most importantly, members of the community. This initiative would target the same level of collaboration and success with the same type of organizations at a national level.

The CVAU has impacted many lives within the San Diego County as well as trained approximately 1,500 service providers and community leaders in issues of immigration and domestic violence. There are 144 documented cases since 2000 of battered immigrants from different countries, including men, women and children, seeking assistance through the CVAU. Of the 144 cases, 82 have been reported in the year 2003. A national program will dramatically increase the number of documented cases of assistance and will help to renovate the image of the Border Patrol among the immigrant community.

It has taken sometime for the CVAU to establish a trusting relationship among some organizations because of the negative stigma the Border Patrol carries within the immigrant community. Earning the trust of this community has not been an easy task, initially few persons attended the presentations. As the CVAU continued to provide presentations, the number of participants increased. The reputation of the CVAU and the quality of the presentations became very popular among the community. It is now very common to receive requests for presentations, forums and conferences from community leaders, schools, service providers, etc.

The CVAU has experienced a large variety of situations. In one occasion, while the CVAU was giving one of the presentations, a participant sitting in the front row was literally shaking. She knew she was sitting right in front of a border patrol agent and it made her nervous. Although she was a victim of domestic violence and had no legal immigration documents, she made a conscious decision to attend the presentation and seek help to get out of her violent relationship, even if it meant being exposed and removed. This individual, for the longest time, coached her children to run and hide whenever they spotted border patrol vehicles, even though they were U.S. citizens. After the presentation, learning that she qualified for VAWA, she broke down in tears, and could not thank us enough for the information and assistance. For the first time in a long time something positive happened to her. She is now able to change her abusive situation without the fear of being removed and make better decisions for her and her family.

By launching this program nationwide, (following the steps of national programs such as, Peer Support, Recruiting, Public Information Office, etc.) the CVAU believes the same impact in the communities all over the United States and other countries can be accomplished. An example of interested international organizations willing to duplicate the CVAU is Igone Guerra, Area Programs Director for the International Organization of Labor in Mexico, who was introduced to the CVAU. Impressed with the achievements of the CVAU, she requested an operation plan in order to introduce a similar model to Mexican Law Enforcement agencies in Mexico City. She

believes that if the Border Patrol has been able establish a positive relationship within a skeptical immigrant community, Mexican law enforcement agencies could do the same for their skeptical general population.

Another significant highlight is that the CVAU has been able to establish a positive working relationship with the Mexican Consul, whereby both agencies are assisting battered immigrants escape violence from their homes. Furthermore, the CVAU has become involved in a Binational Domestic Violence Committee (BDVC). The involvement of this unit in the BDVC consists of providing leadership, training and assistance to our counterparts in Tijuana and Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. Many abusive U.S. citizen spouses and legal residents live in the Mexican part of the border, where the victims may not have the same resources they would have in the U.S. such, as immigration assistance, restraining orders, etc. By becoming involved in the BDVC, we have been able to address these issues. By having a national CVAU program, victims of domestic violence and service providers along the entire U.S.- Mexican border would benefit from the same binational collaboration.

III. BACKGROUND

San Diego, along with many other cities nationwide, experiences domestic violence within its community. However, the City of San Diego has taken a unique more proactive approach when it comes to educating, preventing and targeting the issues of domestic violence. Over the past 15 years the City of San Diego has developed a comprehensive community response to domestic violence, which included the creation of the countywide San Diego Domestic Violence Council in 1989. The San Diego Domestic Violence Council is a volunteer network of community-based organizations, health and medical providers, faith communities, criminal justice agencies and other organizations and individuals who share the common goal of ending relationship violence in San Diego County. The City of San Diego is on the cutting edge of prevention when it comes to domestic violence because of the collaborative efforts of the legal system, law enforcement, advocacy groups, and other essential entities within the community. The San Diego Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit is a national leader in the prevention of domestic violence through its prosecution program and making abusers accountable for their actions. The San Diego Sector Border Patrol saw a need to join these groups in order to assist them in addressing the issues of domestic violence in the illegal immigrant community.

In 1998, the San Diego Sector Border Patrol created the Domestic Violence Unit whose purpose was to begin targeting the abusers of domestic violence. Abusers who have immigration documents as well as those who are in the United States without immigration documents are removable to their country of citizenship based on their criminal conviction of domestic violence. The Border Patrol felt there was a need to assist local law enforcement by arresting immigrant perpetrators who had domestic violence convictions and sending them back to their country of citizenship. The Border Patrol's Domestic Violence Unit was successful in preventing further cases of domestic violence because of the removal of 28 criminal aliens who had domestic violence convictions. However, the domestic violence community (advocates, courts, probation officers, counselors, etc.) was not enthusiastic about the removals. The biggest outcry

from the community was that many perpetrators of domestic violence were still the sole financial support for the families that stayed behind. Therefore, removal of the perpetrators only aggravated the financial and social problems of families.

The input gathered from the San Diego Domestic Violence Council, law enforcement, the courts and advocates showed a greater need to educate the community regarding immigration benefits available to alien victims of domestic violence rather than to remove the perpetrators. Community groups involved in trying to end domestic violence agreed that, not only do abusers need to be held accountable, but the needs of victims need to be addressed. We researched methods of dealing with domestic violence in other communities and found that Duluth, Minnesota is a national leader in domestic violence prevention through both intervention and educational efforts. Our experience showed that removal of the perpetrator from the home was no guarantee that a victim would avoid abuse, but through early intervention and education a victim might be able to make an informed decision in order to end the cycle of violence within their relationship.

The San Diego Sector Border Patrol therefore reevaluated the purpose of its original Domestic Violence Unit and replaced it with the Crime Victim Assistance Unit (CVAU). The CVAU adopted the Duluth, Minnesota, approach of early intervention and education to assist immigrant victims of domestic violence. Our first goal to educate immigrants was initiating collaboration with law enforcement and advocacy groups who come in contact with domestic violence victims. We aimed to initially educate law enforcement agencies because they were typically the first responders to an immigrant domestic violence victim. The second goal was to educate advocacy groups that help victims gain empowerment through counseling sessions, safe houses, domestic violence support groups, etc. The final goal was to educate the community and victims by presentations given through faith organizations, Head Start instructors, school counselors, as well as English as Second Language (ESL) classes.

One challenge facing the CVAU was to dispel the fear victims of domestic violence have of the U.S. Border Patrol. Most victims are afraid they will be sent back to their country because they have not yet completed the process to adjust to a lawful immigration status or are in the United States illegally. They also fear that they may have their children taken away from them once the abusers are sent back to their home country. Another challenge facing the CVAU was to remove the distrust of the Border Patrol brought about by media coverage, false allegations and negative past experiences. A fourth challenge was to obtain cooperation from advocacy groups that work with the migrant community in educating victims of their rights.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

The CVAU first developed an action plan with Standard Operation Procedures used for training Border Patrol Agents assigned to the unit. A Gantt chart was created to manage the program and identify the various tasks and time frames for completion. (Refer to Supplemental Materials for example of Gantt chart.) The initial goal was to go into the community and provide education about the CVAU and its mission. The relationship created within the community was critical in gaining the trust and cooperation of the victims, their family and friends. Without the

support system of family and friends, a victim is less likely to seek assistance and more likely to fall back into the trap of a violent relationship. A victim is more able to escape those relationships or the violence within their home if they can create a more stable environment through the help and support of their family and friends. Therefore, the action plan began by gaining the trust of the community and proving that knowledge is power when it comes to preventing and stopping domestic violence.

The CVAU began the process of educating the community by informing the police and parole departments on immigration issues regarding victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Because a victim may not help law enforcement for fear of retaliation by the perpetrator, law enforcement officers can become frustrated with them and threaten to call the Border Patrol in order to get the victim to cooperate with the investigation. This tactic re-victimizes the victim into submission or non-compliance with the law enforcement officer. It was necessary to train local law enforcement on domestic violence and immigration issues because many officers did not know that a victim of domestic violence could qualify for immigration status through the Violence Against Women Act and the self-petition process. (Refer to flow charts in Supplemental Materials.) They also did not know that an alien perpetrator was amenable to removal based on the domestic violence convictions. Educated officers were able to explain a victim's rights and in turn solicit more cooperation from a victim during an investigation and prosecution. Eight domestic violence victims have been referred by law enforcement officers to the CVAU.

The second step was to educate the advocates who are the second responders to victims. Advocates could help victims realize that the laws are here to protect rather than re-subject them to violence. Initially advocates were hesitant to expose their victims to the U.S. Border Patrol. However, once advocates were trained on immigration issues they were able to reinforce with victims the benefits of seeking assistance through the CVAU. Advocates were educated during their regular monthly meetings as well as in-house training sessions. They continue to request presentations from the CVAU on law updates and other topics regarding immigration issues. Each year victims referred by advocacy groups show an increased awareness of the self-petitioning process and are receptive to assistance from the CVAU.

The CVAU has provided continuous presentations, training and support to the following organizations with over 1500 participants in attendance.

1. ACCESS (Employment Training and Immigration Services)
2. Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition
3. Binational Domestic Violence Committee
4. Casa Familiar
5. Center for Community Solutions
6. Centro Integral de la Familia Actual
7. Citizen Adversity Support Team
8. Child Protective Services
9. Children's Hospital
10. Chula Vista Police Department
11. Coachella Community Center
12. Comision de Derechos Humanos-Tijuana
13. Departamento Integral De La Familia, Tijuana
14. Diocese of San Diego
15. District Attorney Victim Witness
16. Domestic Violence Response Team
17. East County DV Coalition
18. Edison Elementary
19. El Latino/Radio Interview
20. El Nido-Transitional Housing
21. Family Health Centers of San Diego
22. Grupo Amistad
23. Hablando Claro
24. Head Start
25. Health and Human Services Agency
26. Hispanic Association of Professional Services
27. Home Start

28. ICIR- Edd Dunn- San Diego Diocese
29. Instituto de la Mujer-Tijuana-Baja California
30. Jewish Family Services
31. Kimbrough Elementary
32. King Elementary
33. La Escuelita
34. Las Promotoras
35. Latino Social Work Network
36. MAAC Project
37. Male As Positive Forces Conference
38. Mexican Consulate Office
39. MEXFAM-Mexico City
40. National City Collaborative (Melody Paris)
41. Migrant Education/North County
42. Multi-Disciplinary Task Force
43. National City Police Department
44. New Directions Family Resource Center
45. Nueva Aurora
46. Office of Criminal Justice Programs-Sacramento
47. Padres Anonimos
48. Palomar College/Migrant Education Department
49. Planned Parenthood Org. (San Diego, Riverside)
50. Por La Vida-Promotoras
51. Radio 1470 AM

52. Safe Path
53. Salvation Army-Service Providers
54. Salvation Army Challenged Youth Program
55. San Diego Choice
56. San Diego Domestic Violence Council
57. San Diego Job Corps
58. San Diego Police Department
59. San Diego Probation Department
60. San Diego County Sheriff Department
61. San Diego State University
62. SD Volunteer Lawyer Program
63. San Diego School District
64. San Ysidro Elementary
65. Smythe Elementary (Channel 10 News)
66. Southbay Community Services
67. Southbay Faith-Based Communities
68. Southbay Partnerships
69. Southern Indian Health Council
70. USA Victim Witness
71. U. S. Border Patrol Agents
72. Victims Assistance Coordinating Council
73. Villa Nueva Apartments (Section 8)
74. Women's Resource Center of North County

The third step was to educate victims directly about domestic violence and immigration issues. The CVAU placed a Spanish language ad in the Penny Saver advertisement stating, "If you are a victim of domestic violence with immigration issues, then call the Border Patrol Crime Victim Assistance Unit for assistance." The ad appeared weekly from October 2002 through September 2003. Initially victims of domestic violence were very hesitant to call the CVAU however, in the last few months a total of 32 calls were in response to this advertisement. Along with the placement of the ad, the CVAU continued to provide educational training to the community regarding domestic violence and immigration issues. The CVAU also participated in several outreach programs in collaboration with other agencies, such as Health and Human Services Agency, Planned Parenthood and Centro Integral de la Familia (Family Wholeness Center). Additional presentations were given through English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, Head Start Programs, and school resource centers.

The following chart displays the ongoing implementation plan as the program has evolved and grown in the San Diego community.

San Diego Sector Crime Victim Assistance Unit Program Implementation																
	2000				2001				2002				2003			
	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Strategic Planning																
Education/Collaboration																
Law Enforcement Agencies																
Advocacy Groups																
Victims																
Assistance																
Follow-Up																
Mexican Liaison																
Media Outreach																

V. SOLUTIONS

A typical response to the problem of preventing domestic violence is to remove the perpetrators from the home and prevent them from abusing the victim. The Border Patrol Domestic Violence Unit achieved this; however, they realized that removal of the perpetrator from the home was not the solution to preventing domestic violence. It is a temporary patch to a larger problem. The possibility exists that many victims are married to United States citizens and there is no recourse for removal of the perpetrator from the home to a foreign country. There was also the possibility that the perpetrators were lawful immigrants and mandated to the 52-week treatment program. Once they completed the treatment program their record was expunged of the charges of battery on their partner. Nevertheless, lawful immigrants who have been convicted of crimes of violence (whether or not expunged), are subject to removal under immigration laws. However, removal is not always an acceptable solution because the perpetrator may be the only means of financial support for the victim and family.

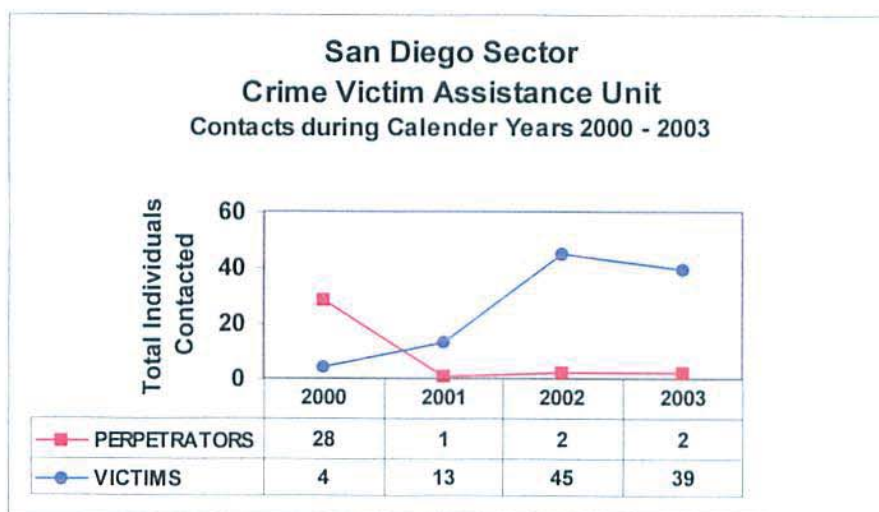
Another response is to remove the victims from the home and send them to a safe house, but again this is only temporary. Many victims have been sent to safe houses where the perpetrators are unable to locate or have contact with them. However, in many instances a victim decides to return to the perpetrator, because of their emotional ties to the perpetrator or the feeling they can work at the relationship. Maybe the victim feels they cannot survive without the perpetrator. For whatever reason given, and there are many (finances, children, pity, faulting themselves, etc.), a victim who is removed from the home and sent to a shelter will probably end up back at the home. When immigration issues come into play with a domestic violence victim, the problem is even greater. An immigrant victim who is in the United States illegally cannot work and cannot receive public assistance. Once they are removed from the home and placed in the shelter, advocates are finding that there is no public assistance available for these victims. As a result, many immigrant victims find themselves going back to the perpetrator.

The most logical response the CVAU found was to educate the victims on their rights so they can be empowered to break the cycle of violence. The victims are the ones who will decide to what point they will let the violence continue within their homes; they are the ones who will decide that enough is enough. The victims will be the ones to call for assistance. But if they do not know whom to call or how the laws will protect them, then they are less likely to call the police or let anyone know of the violence. The CVAU adopted the premise that a victim should be the one who takes the best course of action in order to prevent domestic violence within their relationship. In essence, once a victim was educated about the right to self-petition as a battered spouse, and then given a safety plan, they could make an informed decision to stop the violence.

The CVAU intends to increase the number of immigrant domestic violence victims who come forward for help with their problems. Typically, victims in the immigrant community are merged with the community at large, even though they have very specific needs. The CVAU, by targeting the special needs of illegal immigrant victims of domestic violence, can more effectively assist them with their situations and help them gain independence. Through scheduled monthly meetings with community agencies, the CVAU receives feedback on its progress and impact on domestic violence victims in the illegal immigrant community.

VI. DATA RESULTS

In order to show the improvements within the community the Crime Victim Assistance Unit (CVAU) began to keep statistical data on the victims with whom it came in contact. An intake form was created to track all calls received to the CVAU. During the year 2000 the unit spoke with few victims due to barriers and beliefs within the community. The community also did not understand that the purpose of the unit was to assist victims of domestic violence. The unit met with a total of four victims during the year 2000. Two victims qualified for the self-petition process and two were only seeking counseling services within the community. During the year 2001 the CVAU met with 13 victims either by referrals from other agencies, advocate groups, health centers or presentations. Of those 13 individuals, eight qualified for the self-petition process. In year 2002 the CVAU had a total of 45 contacts with victims of domestic violence. Twenty-five individuals qualified for the self-petition process while others needed counseling services, legal assistance and/or other referral information. As noted in the chart below, victim contact increased dramatically as the focus moved from the perpetrators to the victims.



In the year of 2003, the CVAU was able to do remarkable accomplishments due to the aggressive outreach initiative taken plus the addition of new members to the unit. An average of 4 presentations per month has resulted in an increased number of calls for assistance as well as more trained service providers. The CVAU has now educated and trained approximately 1500 service providers as well as other members of the community. To date 88 calls were made to the CVAU office from victims requesting assistance. The level of assistance depends on each individual case. Some victims may qualify for the self-petition process while others may be referred to other agencies for legal counseling, mental health services, immigration assistance, public benefits, restraining orders, social services, etc.

As part of the outreach program, the CVAU became involved in the planning of three conferences in the last two years:

- Partners In Peace, (U.S. Military and San Diego Domestic Violence Council)
- Males Leadership Forum, (San Diego Domestic Violence Council)
- Males As Positive Forces Conference II (Southbay Partnership)

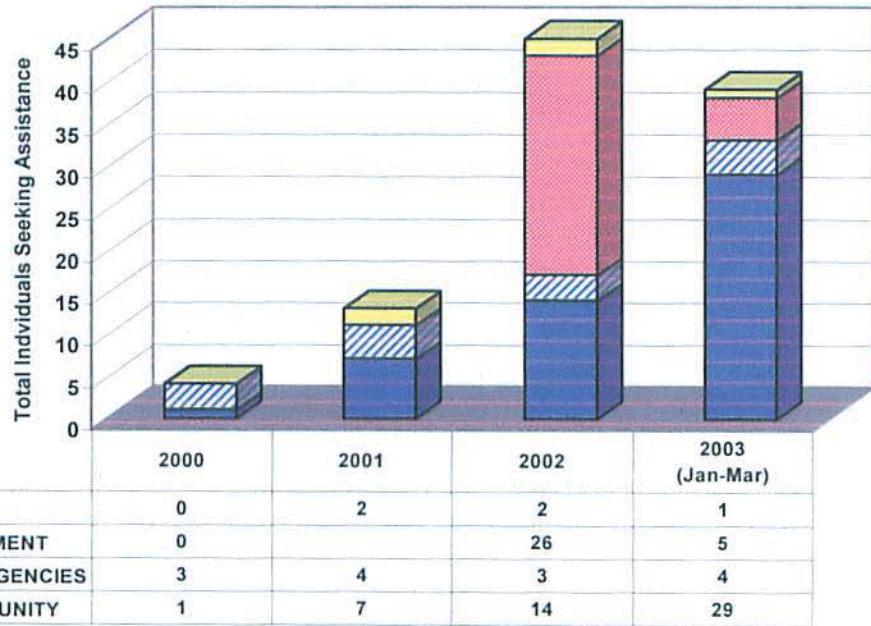
The CVAU has also established permanent relationships with several non-profit organizations as well as binational agencies. The workload has increased over the last few months as involvement increases in several projects with different agencies such as the Strategic Planning Committee of the San Diego Family Justice Center. The CVAU has also volunteered within different committees (Binational DV, CAST, SDDVC, FJC, Planned Parenthood, etc.) to update and develop a comprehensive directory of resources for the domestic violence community within the San Diego and Tijuana regions.

Nevertheless, the greatest indicator of success has been the response from the general community and the impact on the lives of so many battered men, women and children who had it not been for the CVAU would have not yet received any type of assistance or support.

A positive outcome from educating victims in the self-petition process is that many of the victims have been able to receive their immigration documents allowing them to live in the United States without the fear of removal. These individuals are now able to go to school, become employed in the community, and self-support their own families without the abuse and threats from their perpetrators. Many have received their employment authorization documents allowing them to seek work and have begun contributing back to the community. This is promising since many individuals, who felt trapped by their abusers because of their language, work and financial barriers, are now able to empower themselves and break the cycle of violence.

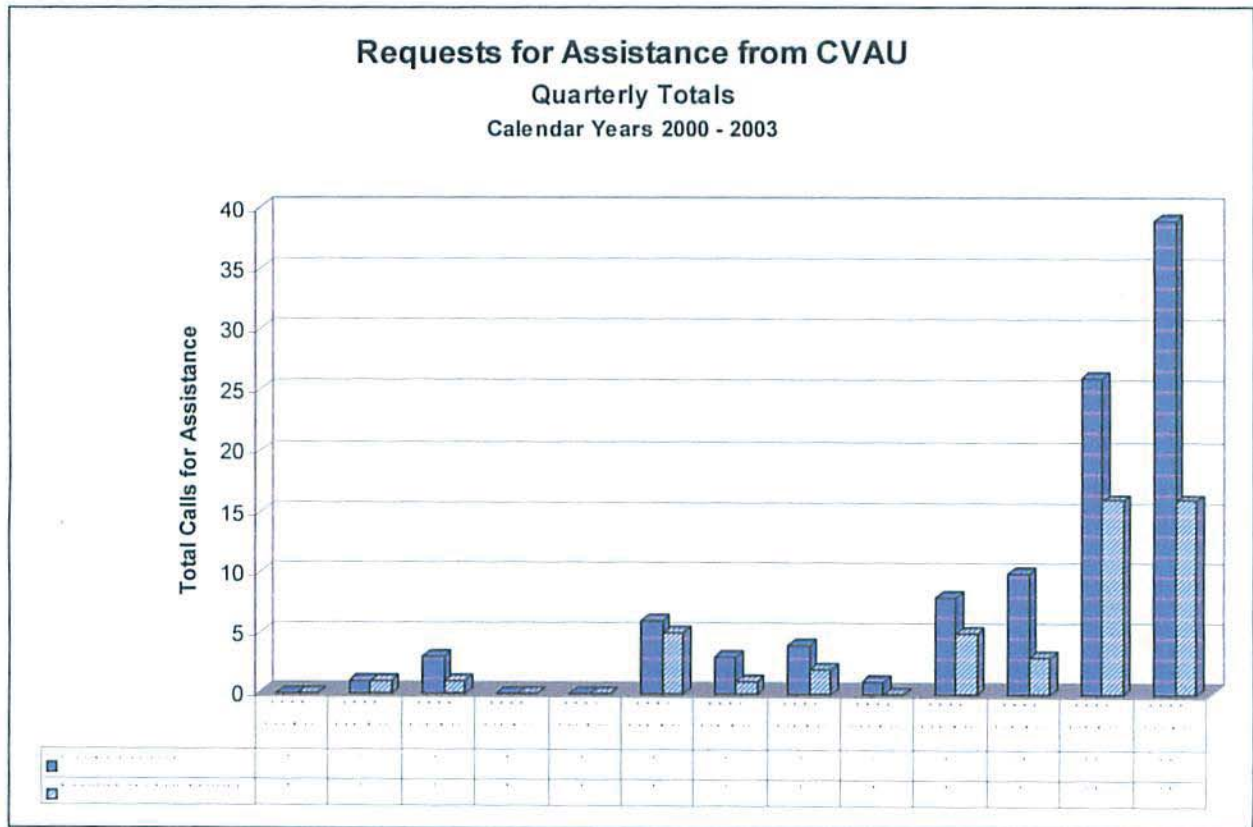
A great number of calls to the CVAU have been the result of an ad created for the Penny Saver advertisement. This is a free publication distributed by mail to homes in San Diego County. The ad written in the Spanish language states that a victim of domestic violence with immigration issues can call the CVAU for assistance. It is not a solicitation for referrals for perpetrators but a channel that allows victims the opportunity to educate themselves on the immigration laws that affect them. This ad ran from October 2002 through September 2003 in the southern area publication of the Penny Saver. Documentation illustrated in the chart below shows that 32 calls were made to the CVAU as a result of this advertisement. The CVAU plans to continue this ad on a quarterly basis to maintain visibility to the changing population of illegal migrants. Additional ads will be placed in publications that reach other localities (northern, eastern, etc.) within San Diego County. The national goal is to have an ad like the one in the Penny Saver placed in every community in the United States.

**San Diego Sector Crime Victim Assistance Unit
Calls for Assistance
Calendar Years 2000 - 2003**



As of today, the CVAU has become an invaluable source of information for our local community by eliminating the barriers of distrust and skepticism among service providers and the illegal immigrant community. Moreover, the CVAU has become a support network for victims of domestic violence with immigration issues. Victims no longer have fear of removal when being threatened by their abusive partner, and they have the assurance that the Border Patrol will not play on the side of the abusive partner. The CVAU has made a direct and permanent impact on the lives of victims through sincere assistance, compassion and care.

The following chart reflects the total victims assisted over time and those who qualified for the self-petitioning process. As of March 2003, a total of 101 victims have been assisted and 50 qualified to apply for legal resident status. Through an expedited process these victims may receive employment authorization within 90 days of receipt of the petition, and can look forward to becoming permanent legal residents. The exponential growth of the program during the first quarter of 2003 shows a 247% increase in victims assisted over the quarterly average of victims assisted in 2002. If the trend continues we expect to assist as many as 156 victims in 2003.



VI. CONCLUSION

The CVAU has been invited to participate in many functions promoting the prevention of domestic violence within the community. The CVAU serves as an advisory member for the planning and actualization of the Family Justice Center. The Family Justice Center is a one-stop shop for victims of domestic violence within San Diego County. A victim of domestic violence can go to the center, make a report with the police department, obtain a restraining order against the perpetrator and have an advocate appointed to them based on their need. Future expanded services will include medical attention and sexual assault exams.

Other positive outcomes have been the participation with the San Diego Domestic Violence Council's Partners in Peace Conference and Men's Leadership Forum. The Partners in Peace Conference is a collaboration between the San Diego Domestic Violence Council, the U. S. Navy, U. S. Marine Corps, San Diego Sheriff's Department and the San Diego Sector Border Patrol CVAU in educating the military and civilian community on domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault issues. The 2002 Partners in Peace conference had approximately 150 attendees with nationally recognized speakers. The Men's Leadership Forum is an annual event to reach out to men in the community to prevent gender-based violence. The CVAU served as a liaison between the San Diego Domestic Violence Council and the Mayor's Office in Tijuana, Mexico, to ensure a representative attended the Forum. The CVAU has also provided two Immigration Forums for the community educating advocates about domestic violence and the self-petition process. The CVAU is also involved in the planning of the Males As Positive Forces

Conference II which is sponsored by the Southbay Partnership. The purpose of this conference is to promote the involvement of men, adult and youth, in issues of domestic violence as well as other health and social issues.

The CVAU has brought to the attention of the San Diego Domestic Violence Council that in order to continue to prevent domestic violence within our community work was also needed for the sister community of Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. Because of San Diego's close proximity to the international border a large portion of the community migrates back and forth between San Diego and Tijuana. Regardless of nationality, domestic violence victims have similar issues when it comes to abuse. However, immigrants have even more because of the cultural issues, economics, race, language, religion, and most important, their immigration status. The objective is to educate the community of Tijuana, Mexico, so that they also can work towards prevention of domestic violence. During the last Men's Leadership Forum in February 2003, a representative from the Mayor's Office in Tijuana pledged to work toward preventing domestic violence and educating their community. The international significance is that without the collaboration with our sister city to our south many victims and perpetrators will continue to fall through the cracks and not seek or receive the assistance they deserve.

In response to this binational need, the San Diego Domestic Violence Council, as well as other organizations, such as Planned Parenthood, Center for Community Solutions, San Diego Police Department and the CVAU created a Binational Domestic Violence Committee. Several Mexican organizations are also involved in the development of this new committee. The work being done by this committee will have an unprecedented impact in the Tijuana domestic violence community.

San Diego Sector Border Patrol has found that the process of providing education to the community has a larger benefit than the removal of domestic violence perpetrators, because it allows victims to be empowered. It is a method that can be replicated by all agencies working in the domestic violence arena. By educating the community in the nation we will assist law enforcement agencies, advocate groups and victims in preventing domestic violence and other serious crimes. Educating the community is a big step in the prevention of domestic violence, because it is an ongoing process that does not end due to the nature of domestic violence. As victims become educated about their rights, they will be able to make decisions that will help them escape the violence. Immigrant victims, who believed they would never get out of a domestic violence relationship, are now finding themselves working, going to school, and contributing back to the community. Through consistent training and commitment members of the CVAU gained the trust of the advocates and victims in the domestic violence arena as well as the San Diego community.

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