About Us

Formed in 1999, the Clinic provides comprehensive civil legal services to low-income victims of domestic abuse, stalking, and sexual assault while preparing University of Oregon law students for work in the law.

The University of Oregon School of Law partners with Lane County Legal Aid and Advocacy Center, Womenspace, and Sexual Assault Support Services in administering the Stop Violence Against Women Clinic Project, of which the Domestic Violence Clinic is an integral part.

Since its inception, the Stop Violence Against Women Clinic Project has helped represent approximately 6,500 victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking and their children.

DV Clinic Staff Travels to K Falls

Klamath Falls, OR-

On July 11, 2008, attorneys at the Clinic traveled to Klamath Falls to train attorneys from Klamath and Lake Counties on domestic violence and sexual assault.

The training was made possible by a generous donation from the Klamath Medical Service Bureau Foundation.

The training, entitled What You Don’t Know Can Kill: Competently Representing Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, was intended to increase the number of attorneys in the area who can help low-income victims.

There were presentations on the connection between violence and public health (Merle Weiner), interviewing victims (Pat Vallerand and Dana Woolbright), common legal problems encountered by victims (Gina Stewart), resources (Dana Woolbright), and ethics (Pat Vallerand).
Klamath Falls Externship: Samantha Evans

Samantha Evans was the first participant in the new externship in Klamath Falls. This was a perfect fit for Samantha, as she developed a strong interest in DV law after taking a seminar with Professor Merle Weiner.

The highlight of her externship involved representing a disabled woman in a restraining-order case. Although DV survivors sometimes have trust and anxiety issues to overcome, it was even more pronounced with this particular client because of her disability. Samantha had to work hard with her client’s caregiver in order to gain her client's trust.

Samantha’s client was terrified of the courtroom setting, and especially of the Respondent. Therefore, her client was given permission to testify in a room across the street from the courthouse. Samantha’s first courtroom experience turned out to be streamed through a live video feed, as opposed to a traditional setting. Samantha described this experience as incredible and thoroughly challenging. Furthermore, she was able keep the restraining order and create a workable safety plan for her client.

Aside from that case, Samantha worked on a variety of matters for clients, including restraining orders, property division, and a custody case.

Reaching Out to Faith-Based Communities

The Clinic has made it a goal to increase its responsiveness through faith-based communities. One way this goal is met is through clergy training. Dr. Ron Clark recently trained six clergy in Oregon. The training began with a discussion about how the clergy members defined DV. This discussion became a real eye-opener as one leader indicated that DV does not occur in his church.

In these trainings, Dr. Clark discusses how to recognize DV, how to support both the victim and the abuser, and how to become acquainted with DV services in the each community.

Another part of the training involves an “In Her Shoes” simulation. This is an experimental demonstration of some roadblocks and challenges that DV survivors face when trying to end an abusive relationship.

This simulation helps develop compassion for victims and an understanding of how much courage and hard work it takes to leave abusive relationships, especially when there are children and financial issues involved.

Another training is scheduled for November. Please contact Sido Surkis at ssurkis@lclac.org for more information.
Friend of the Clinic: Melissa Aubin

Melissa Aubin, UO Law Alum 2004, has provided excellent support for the Domestic Violence Clinic. Through a collaborative effort, she has successfully applied for a number of grants, including grants for $25,000 from the Collins Foundation in 2006, $25,000 from the Spirit Mountain Foundation in 2007, and $6,000 from the Jill Heiman Foundation in 2007. She recently submitted another application for the Collins Grant for $90,095.

Immediately after graduation, Melissa worked as a law clerk for the Honorable Judge Schuman on the Oregon Court of Appeals. Afterwards, she became a staff attorney for the Honorable Judge Coffin at the Oregon Federal District Court. She recently traveled across the country to Washington D.C. so she can contribute to the United States Supreme Court through its Fellows Program. For one year she will work in the Office of the Chief Justice and then she will return to Oregon.

Melissa is passionate about public law work and has a strong commitment in doing pro bono work; however, this was complicated since she worked in the judiciary and could not advocate for clients. The DV Clinic allowed Melissa to volunteer within the constraints of professional guidelines. The DV Clinic greatly appreciates Melissa’s hard work and wishes her well in her new adventures.

DV Cases: What Research Shows About Dual Arrests

The U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) funded the first large-scale research project on dual arrests. Dual arrests occur when the police arrest both parties in a dispute because they cannot determine who is at fault or they think both parties are at fault.

Prior research had indicated that mandatory and preferred arrest laws result in more single and dual arrests of women. However, past studies were limited to single departments, only departments within a single state, and generally small sample sizes and did not accurately reflect DV arrest practices.

The new study illustrates that dual-arrest rates are low. However, in states with mandatory arrest laws, dual arrests occur more often than states with preferred or discretionary laws. In order to address this issue, twenty-four states have passed “Primary Aggressor” legislation in order to avoid arresting the victim.

For example, in Oregon, an officer is given four guidelines to help determine who is the aggressor. The officer is to look at (1) the comparative extent of injuries and seriousness of threats creating fear of injury; (2) the history of DV between persons involved; (3) the self-defensive actions; and (4) the potential for future assaults. ORS § 133.055(2)(c).

Although Primary Aggressor laws reduce the total number of dual arrests for heterosexual couples, police still have difficulties determining who the primary aggressor is with same-sex couple disputes.

This study was based on 577,862 police records from 2,819 police departments in 19 states. For more information on this study, please see the USDOJ’s sponsored study at http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/218355.pdf.

“The U.S. Department of Justice is committed to raising awareness and supporting training and services responding to incidents of domestic violence.”
Announcement

Calling our Readers, especially Clinic Alums:

If you would like to submit some information for our next newsletter about what has been happening professionally or otherwise in your life, please email news to mweiner@uoregon.edu.

We’d love to hear from you!

You can help!

☑ YES! I want to support the Domestic Violence Clinic!

☑ $25 ☑ $50 ☑ $100 ☑ $500 ☑ $1000 ☑ Other_______

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