

Family Violence

No one doubts the impact the recession is having on the local economy. Economic stress from being out of work also weighs heavily on an entire family. When a family's budget is depleted, parents may be worried about where their next meal will come from, if they can afford a child's medication or if they will lose their home.

Often these stressors can increase the severity of family violence. For a household that is already troubled, domestic violence could escalate. Attacks could become more frequent or severe. Victims may feel they have few choices without the financial resources to support them. Victims and abusers also have more contact as spouses and parents are laid off and spend more time at home. Increased contact leads to increased severity and frequency of incidents.

Local news, health care and human services organizations report:

- 40 percent increase in cases from last year and a 60 percent from two years ago
- Domestic violence shelters and crisis services struggling to meet the growing demand for services
- 54 percent of the victims calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline reporting a change in the household financial situation in the past year

An Expensive Issue

Child abuse has a significant impact on the economy. Abused and neglected children are more likely to have poorer health, experience challenges in problem solving skills, and struggle with depression or anxiety. In addition, these victims often need very expensive services and treatments to repair physical and emotional damage. Immediate costs can include hospitalization, mental health services, law enforcement and child protective services. However, it is the longer term costs such as mental health, health care and lost productivity, that weigh most heavily on our families and on society.

A Political Debate

State legislators and Governor Brewer are currently struggling with the state's priorities, budgets and most critical needs. At Valley of the Sun United Way we urge you to join us in advocating for a responsible budget that accounts for the needs of victims of family violence and other vulnerable populations. Although difficult, solutions for our state's budget crisis can be created as we forge ahead and offer a unified voice to our state's leaders - ask for a budget that meets today's vital basic needs while strengthening the future for all Arizonans.