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# **The Community-Based Outreach Program A Vital Resource for Medical Professionals Working with Victims of Domestic Violence**

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The U.S. Surgeon General reports that battering is the single-most common cause of injury to women resulting in more injuries than automobile accidents, rapes and muggings combined. The American Medical Association reports that 22% to 35% of all emergency room visits by women are caused by abuse. In Hawaii, almost 100,000 days of hospitalization, 30,000 emergency room visits, and 40,000 trips to the doctor every year are the result of domestic violence. Medical professionals are often the first point of contact for battered women. Those in the medical profession are adept at healing the physical wounds and ailments, but often don't know how to begin to heal the emotional injury or to help a woman become safe. Doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel may be intimidated by the subject of domestic violence, as are many others. The Community-Based Outreach Program (CBOP), a program of Parents and Children Together (PACT), can offer vital assistance for medical professionals who are treating battered women.

CBOP is a service which provides crisis intervention, education, support, information and community referral to victims of domestic violence. A trained and highly skilled domestic violence counselor will meet with a domestic violence victim at any safe location, including hospitals, physicians' offices or any other community location. Safety, for client and counselor, is primary, thus CBOP counselors will not meet clients in their homes. If no safe location is available, or if the client prefers, counseling is provided by telephone.

Historically, the CBOP phone number was available only to referring professionals. Currently, however, in an effort to reduce barriers for battered women to obtain assistance, CBOP will accept referrals from both professionals and clients. This also makes it

easier for medical professionals, as the CBOP number and information can be given directly to the patient, and she can call at her convenience. However, CBOP welcomes referral calls from medical professionals as the information provided by physicians is often extremely helpful.

CBOP began in July of 1995 and since that time has served more than 150 community-referred victims of domestic violence. CBOP's objective is to empower and educate those who have been victimized by domestic violence. Crisis theory, which the program is based on, says people are more amenable to change during a time of crisis. CBOP, therefore, responds during these crisis times with the intention of providing the tools and resources for change. For many clients, this is the first time they have received information about the cycle of violence. With more information, battered women are better equipped to take steps to ensure the safety of themselves and their children. During an intervention, the CBOP counselor assesses the client's situation and provides intervention based on the nature of a client's crisis. The client's safety is considered foremost, thus the counselor will always create a safety plan with the client whether she is able to leave the violent situation or not.

CBOP is a vital resource for physicians. Victims of domestic violence who seek primary care from their personal physicians and from emergency rooms will have the opportunity to speak with a trained professional about the violence plaguing their lives.

A CBOP counselor may be reached by calling the voice mail pager at (808) 549-8462. A counselor will return the call within five minutes. CBOP services are available Monday to Friday 8 am to 1 am, and Saturday and Sunday, 5 pm to 1 am.