

Equal Justice

NEWSLETTER OF THE NYS JUDICIAL COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN THE COURTS



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REPORT RECOMMENDS EXPLORING PROSTITUTION DIVERSION COURTS

Exploring the development of prostitution diversion courts is among the recommendations outlined in the first Interagency Report on Human Trafficking. The report suggests modeling these courts on the existing programs in the Midtown Community Court and the Queens Criminal Court. Diversion programs, the report says, reduce the suffering caused by trafficking through focusing efforts on helping victims rather than on prosecuting them.

The report, issued in August 2008, describes accomplishments of the Interagency Task Force in the year since New York State's passed its pioneering anti-trafficking law. Training law enforcement and government agency personnel, reaching out to the public to increase awareness of trafficking, creating programs for victims, and coordinating efforts of various government agencies are among the Interagency Task Force's activities. The report also looks ahead and suggests initiatives for the immediate future, among them exploring ways of diverting those charged with prostitution from the normal flow of criminal courts.

The full report can be seen at:

http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/pio/humantrafficking/human_trafficking_rpt_aug08.pdf

LAW EXPANDS ACCESS TO FAMILY COURT FOR ORDERS OF PROTECTION

Dating couples, teens still living with their families, same sex partners, and people living together in intimate but non-marital relationships may petition for Family Court Orders of Protection under legislation recently signed into law. Previously only people related by blood, married couples, and couples with a child in common could file family offense petitions.

The new law extends access to Family Court to people in intimate relationships, but, instead of defining "intimate,"

leaves to courts to determine whether a petitioner qualifies under the new law. Not included are ordinary social and business associates, such as roommates, office acquaintances, and fellow students. However, a relationship need not be sexual to meet the definition. The law asks judges to consider the nature or type of a relationship and, for example, its duration and the frequency of interactions.

The law went into effect on July 21, 2008. It can be found in Laws of 2008, Chapter 326, section 8665.

**Information sheets
and simple user guides
from the Office for
Prevention of
Domestic Violence
(OPDV)**

Domestic Violence and Child Safety Planning Guide

http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/health_humsvc/childwelfare/dvchild_safetyplan.html

Intimate Partner Sexual Abuse Guide

http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/health_humsvc/childwelfare/dvchild_safetyplan.html

Teen Dating Violence Information Guide

http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/public_awareness/teen_dat_viol/tdvinfoguide.html

Domestic Violence Data Sheet

http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/about_dv/dataweb2003.html

PROFILE OF WOMEN IN NEW YORK

New York ranks 44th among the states in the proportion of women living in poverty according to a new report from the Institute for Women's Research, although New York is among the nation's wealthiest states. According to the report, "New York State has the worst income gap between the rich and the poor in the nation."

The report gathers together a wealth of information about New York's women and families. Among the facts from the report are these:

DEMOGRAPHICS

Fewer than half (45%) of New York's households are headed by heterosexual, married couples (compared to 50% nationally).

A full 28% of New York families with children under 18 are headed by women (compared to 25% nationally).

WOMEN'S INCOME

New York women's income has remained stagnant during the last decade and a half. In 1989 women's median income was \$33,400 (adjusted for inflation). In 2005 their median income was \$33,300.

Married women contributed 34% of married couples' incomes in 2000 (up from 26% in 1979).

WAGE GAP

In New York State, women working full-time earn only 78% of the wages of full-time employed men.

New York's wage gap is 12th among the states, well behind top-ranked District of Columbia and Arizona, where full-time employ women earn 86% of their male counterparts.

At every level of education, women earn less than men. Their earnings are \$6000 to \$21,000 less than men with comparable education.

OLDER WOMEN

Only one in three women 65 years or older in New York has a pension.

Single women predominate in the ranks of women 65 years or older in New York; 63% are either widowed, divorced, or never married.

The full report is available from the Institute for Women's Policy Research's website at: <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/R343.pdf>

RECENT REPORTS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Calling in Abuse: How Domestic Violence Perpetrators are Using the Child Welfare System to Continue Their Abuse, A Report by the Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum, July 2008, available at <http://pubadvocate.nyc.gov/policy/documents/DVACSRReportFinal-WebJuly2008.pdf> or by calling 212-669-7200.

Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in New York City, Report from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (2008), available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/public/ipv-08.pdf>