Grief, Anger & Good Intentions:
Responding to Sexual Violence in Vermont

by Sarah Kenney, Public Policy Coordinator
and Chani Waterhouse, Program Support Coordinator

Unless you’ve been out of the country or in a complete media blackout for the past several months, you’ve probably heard of Vermont District Court Judge Edward Cashman and the now infamous Mark Hulett. Media reports across the country focused on the very short amount of time that Mark Hulett would spend in jail under a sentence handed down by Judge Cashman on January 4th: a mere sixty days for aggravated sexual assault of a six-year-old girl. The outrage sparked calls for drastic reform in Vermont’s sentencing laws, including the adoption of 25-year mandatory minimum sentences for sex crimes modeled after Florida’s “Jessica’s Law”.

When a circumstance like the Hulett case forces the tragedy of sexual violence into the front and center of public consciousness, it’s tempting to look for solutions that satisfy our desire to see justice done, and done quickly. Those who struggle with these issues every day face the painful conclusion that there are no easy answers.

By strange and fortuitous coincidence, early January also saw the completion of The Vermont Approach: A Strategic Plan for Comprehensive, Collaborative Sexual Violence Prevention. This document synthesizes a year’s worth of research and the input of many diverse stakeholders from around the state. The controversy over Cashman’s sentence ensured that everyone was talking about sexual violence, and The Vermont Approach provided much-needed answers to policy-makers’ questions about how to prevent sexual violence. The Vermont Approach is already having a positive impact on public policy in Vermont, joining and amplifying voices for change, and harnessing grief, anger and good intentions to drive cultural transformation.

This newsletter highlights The Vermont Approach, detailing the five-year strategic plan to dramatically reduce sexual violence in our state. Another article, The Cashman Conundrum, clarifies the truth behind the media buzz, and reminds us that prevention must not be undertaken at the expense of perpetrator accountability and safety and healing for victims.

We have a long way to go to eradicate the epidemic of sexual violence in Vermont, but the energy and enthusiasm are mounting in our communities, and we now have a new blueprint to channel that momentum. Read on to learn how you can make a difference.
The Cashman Conundrum:
Creating Responsible Policy around Sexual Violence

by Sarah Kenney, Public Policy Coordinator

On January 4, 2006, Judge Edward Cashman sentenced Mark Julett to 60 days in prison for continually sexually assaulting a young girl over a span of four years, spawning national outrage. Less prominent in the media accounts was the fact that Hulett was sentenced on three separate counts and his maximum sentence is almost 100 years. Judge Cashman stated that the 60-day prison term was necessary because Hulett had been classified by the Department of Corrections (DOC) as a low-risk offender. It was the DOC’s policy at the time to only provide sex offender treatment programs in prison to high- or moderate-risk sex offenders. “Low-risk” offenders like Hulett were treated in the community, meaning that he would not receive any treatment until after being released from jail; Cashman said his sentence was intended to get Hulett into treatment as soon as possible. In response to the outrage over Judge Cashman’s sentence in the Hulett case, the DOC changed its policy and began providing sex offender treatment to all incarcerated offenders. Because of this policy change and appeals from the prosecutors, Judge Cashman amended the original minimum sentence — changing it from 60 days to three years.

Even if he gets out after his minimum three years, Mark Hulett will be under the supervision of the DOC for the rest of his life. He is under strict conditions — if he drinks, associates with children, fails to comply with sex offender treatment or violates any of the 22 conditions of his probation, he will go back to jail. Does this make the initial sentencing acceptable? No. But it’s a prime example of the countless ways in which public furor over widely publicized crimes of sexual violence can sometimes serve to undermine our community’s understanding of the breadth and scope of sexual violence in our communities.

What image does the general public conjure up when they think about rape and sexual abuse? Generally, it’s something like this: stranger, scary, pervert in the bushes, blood, injury, weapons, physical force, clear-cut facts and victims with no faults, blemishes, or mental health concerns who have never used drugs or alcohol. We know that this image represents a very small minority of crimes of sexual violence in our communities. We know that last year in Vermont, 99% of the crimes of sexual violence reported to law enforcement were perpetrated by someone known to the victim; the majority of these were family members and friends. We know that survivors of sexual violence look like any other woman, child or man in our lives, and that the perpetrators can look like anyone, including our fathers, brothers, partners, neighbors, mayors, bankers… and the list goes on.

The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence spent the better part of 2005 working with the state legislature’s House Judiciary Committee and other stakeholders to dig into the complicated issues of sex offender management. There were lots of proposals put forward for dealing with these crimes in our communities: civil commitment, mandatory minimum prison sentences, electronic monitoring with GPS bracelets, mandatory counseling and treatment of sex offenders, chemical castration, and more. These are critically important issues that we at the Network – and the entire anti-sexual violence movement – have been struggling with.

At first blush, the response seems straightforward: we should support whatever policies will promote justice for sexual violence survivors and support their healing. Dig a little deeper, though, and it becomes so much more complicated. We know that each survivor of sexual violence is unique and has her or his own strengths and resiliencies. Appropriate legal response will therefore look different for different survivors. Likewise, not all sex offenders are the same; the legal system’s response must be tailored to each individual’s threat, risk, and amenability to intervention and treatment.

Take mandatory minimum prison sentences as an example. Long mandatory minimum prison sentences (like the 25 year minimums in Jessica’s Law) will take away the incentive for defendants to enter into plea agreements. This will mean many more trials, regardless of individual survivors’ willingness or ability to participate in the prosecution. More trials mean more vulnerable survivors – especially children – going through the trauma...
What would Vermont look like without sexual violence? These were some of the heady questions a group of us pondered last December, holed up for the day at a Strategic Planning Summit. We were a diverse group tasked with thinking together about what would be required to dramatically reduce sexual violence in Vermont in the foreseeable future. (see History, page 7)

We have become so accustomed to violence against women and children that the task sometimes felt awkward. As one male colleague said, “We think of men’s violence in the same way that we think about the weather: it’s going to rain, so we’d better get out our raincoats, boots and umbrellas.” On that day in December we were to imagine something different: that it was possible to stop the rain from falling.

The Vermont Approach synthesizes the best thinking from that day in December, as well as wisdom gathered from individual interviews, focus groups, a statewide conference, and research on prevention from around the country and around the world. Its author, Dr. Susan Roche, uses seven strategies to organize the content, each with its own timeline for implementing an array of activities. The plan hums with the energy and intention of all who contributed to it and share its mission: to transform those aspects of culture that produce, exacerbate and take for granted sexual violence.

STRATEGY: Developing Community Efforts and New Community Allies in Sexual Violence Prevention

The Vision: It’s a humid summer afternoon, and the City Hall conference room windows are wide open. The room is full of adults and youth, chatting and snacking before a meeting. The leader of the local Boy Scout troop is brainstorming with a batterer’s intervention group facilitator and the advocate from the local rape crisis center about how to address issues that have emerged since they started implementing a healthy relationships discussion project with the scouts. Across the room, a school guidance counselor is getting advice from a group of teenagers on issues she is facing in her school.

When the meeting is convened, participants welcome a guest presenter from the leadership of The Vermont Approach, who updates them on statewide sexual violence prevention activities. The guest then leads the group in a discussion of what is working well in their community collaboration and what their needs are. The guest shares strategies that have helped other communities, and leads the group in problem-solving and planning for their work together.

The Plan: Many diverse stakeholders around Vermont care deeply about preventing sexual violence. The Vermont Approach will create new mechanisms for connecting stakeholders and supporting collaborative work at the community level. Links between local and statewide work will be forged and strengthened, ensuring that those working at the local level can coordinate across communities, and the most promising practices and resources can be shared around the state. When high profile sexual violence cases offer opportunities to educate, stakeholders will quickly mobilize, coordinating and amplifying sexual violence prevention messages.
**STRATEGY: Changing Media Representations**

**The Vision:** It’s midnight on Friday. Three boys and a girl are driving on muddy back roads, eating junk food and listening to their favorite radio program, “Do It Right”, a call-in program hosted by a panel of Vermont young adults. The program focuses on respect and ethical sexual behavior. Today’s caller is a young woman who says that she and a good friend recently “hooked up”, and they haven’t talked since. What should she do? She wants their friendship to continue as it was before their physical involvement, but she doesn’t know what he wants.

The teens laugh and joke about what the woman should do, but then listen attentively as the panelists ask more questions:

“Who made the first move?”

“How much had you had to drink? What about him?”

“Were you comfortable with where things were going? Did he KNOW you were comfortable? How?”

“What?! Neither of you talked about protection? How much did you say you’d had to drink?”

As the panelists offer their prescriptions for ethical behavior by the woman and her friend, the teens engage in a heated debate about the panelists’ judgments.

It’s almost curfew for several of the teens, so the driver takes her friends home one by one.

**The Plan:** Sexual violence existed long before today’s media that we know and love to hate, but today the media provides unprecedented volumes of images and messages that at best fail to challenge sexual violence, and at worst actively and explicitly promote it. Most of the media available for consumption in Vermont is created elsewhere, by outlets more or less impervious to Vermonters’ concerns about the impact of their products. However, even here in Vermont there are numerous opportunities for changing media representations and for using the media to promote sexual violence prevention.

*The Vermont Approach* has already begun to identify advisors from within the media, to help guide work in this area. Changing media representations will involve working with media outlets, carrying out effective media campaigns, using media to spread transformative messages, and promoting media literacy as an essential aspect of a well-rounded education in the 21st Century.

**STRATEGY: Contributing to the SVP Capacity of State and Local Institutions**

**The Vision:** A group of administrative and facility staff at the University of Vermont have gathered in a room for a discussion group, part of the University’s extensive Sexual Violence Prevention training. Male and female co-facilitators lead the group in examining the social roots of sexual violence and harassment. Over the course of the training, they are challenged to look at personal beliefs and behaviors, educated about the university’s mission to create a safe, just and peaceful environment for all students and staff, and trained in how to intervene in and respond to sexual harassment and sexual violence by students, faculty, staff and administrators.

**The Plan:** Our organizations and institutions have been created in a culture that has continued to allow sexual violence to occur, that sees sexual violence as somehow inevitable. In making a commitment to sexual violence prevention, institutions and organizations can make enormous contributions to shifting cultural norms and ensuring that cultural changes take hold and stick in the face of backlash.

Institutions can promote sexual violence prevention through internal processes like providing effective sexual harassment training, and ensuring an appropriate institutional response to the sexual violence that does occur within the institution. They can also promote prevention through examination.
and transformation of how they work with their “constituents”: college students, school children, people with limited economic resources, families “in crisis”, perpetrators and survivors of sexual violence, or whomever they may be.

The trouble is that most institutions don’t know how to do this, and many don’t even know why it is important that they get involved. This is what The Vermont Approach aims to change, laying out a plan for doing just that.

**STRATEGY: Educating Professionals, Families and Individuals**

**The Vision:** A 14-year-old girl has a secret, but she knows she can’t keep it. She knows very well that the guidance counselor is mandated to report sexual abuse of minors, but also that she will be supported. As soon as she gets to school she goes straight to the guidance counselor’s office. She is warmly welcomed and discreetly asked if she would like to talk. She does talk, and feels heard, believed and supported. The counselor validates her belief, shaky this morning yet still deeply ingrained from all her parents and teachers have taught her, that what happened last night at the party with her friend’s dad was not her fault.

Outside the office in the student lounge, two older boys approach a third boy who has just made a sexual comment to a girl who obviously did not welcome it. “Don’t talk to her like that,” says one of the boys. “She’s a human being — she doesn’t deserve to be treated like a sexual object.” The other boy approaches the girl and asks if she is ok. A teacher walks by, and after hearing what happened, decides to refer the offending boy for a mentor.

**The Plan:** While this image of Vermont is not free of sexual violence, it sure is moving in the right direction. What makes the difference? Projects of The Vermont Approach have changed the landscape. Sexual violence prevention is integrated into schools’ curricula, policies and practices. Professionals in and out of schools are effectively educated about sexual violence prevention as part of their professional training. Individuals know how to promote safety, peace with justice, and human rights; they are highly motivated to do so, and reflect these values in their language. Systems are in place to respond effectively to perpetrators, including young perpetrators, ensuring that they have opportunities to better understand the impact of their actions and are challenged to change attitudes, beliefs and behavior. Finally, survivors’ rights and needs are of central concern.

**STRATEGY: Learning from and Developing The Vermont Approach**

**The Vision:** The coordinator of The Vermont Approach stands at the podium. She and a researcher are presenting a workshop on Vermont’s Social Norms Mentoring Project, and the conference room is packed. She has been asked to speak at numerous national conferences like this one, and usually co-presents with one of the researchers who have helped to design or evaluate the different projects that are now serving as national models for best practice in sexual violence prevention. Vermont is truly leading the nation in preventing sexual violence.

**The Plan:** Many anti-violence organizations are doing great work. Most of the time, we are limited in our ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of our projects, forced to rely on qualitative analysis and feedback, and on outcome evaluation tools that may or may not be giving us meaningful information. The Vermont Approach aims to change all that.

There are many researchers and academics with an interest in issues related to sexual violence prevention. The Vermont Approach will bring them together with practitioners to create collaborative projects that will promote the mission and goals of sexual violence prevention.

Collaborations between researchers and practitioners allow each to do what they do best, ground prevention projects in solid research about what works, evidence the impact of funders’ dollars and ensure that “best practices” are recognized and can be emulated.
STRATEGY: Generating Income and Budgeting Resources

The Vision: The Leadership Forum of The Vermont Approach is meeting to discuss funding priorities. The Forum steers and coordinates the sexual violence prevention projects of The Vermont Approach. Members represent agencies and organizations focused on anti-violence work, each with its own funding needs and priorities, yet the discussion is characterized by camaraderie, reflective dialogue and cooperation.

There is never enough money to do all that the Leadership Forum would like, but there is enough to make a real difference in Vermont. The members of the Forum have found that through careful planning and creative collaborations among those doing anti-violence work, and between these organizations and funders, they have been able to do much more, individually and collectively, than before they started working together.

Perhaps most importantly, each individual member of the Leadership Forum comes to the table with a commitment to The Vermont Approach as a whole, rather than advocating first and foremost for her or his particular organization or project.

The Plan: The Vermont Approach adopts a new perspective on funding: promoting long-term partnerships between funders and anti-violence collaborations; cultivating funding for comprehensive approaches and for exploration of promising new strategies; developing innovative new resources; and pooling resources within collaborations.

The very existence of The Vermont Approach creates new opportunities for generating resources. The plan synthesizes a diversity of wisdom into a collective whole, prescribes a foundation of collaboration, attacks oppressive social norms from all sides at once, and emphasizes sustainability and the institutionalization of social change. All of this is appealing to funders, who are increasingly concerned with collaboration and sustainability. Rather than scrambling to respond to random funding opportunities as they emerge, anti-violence organizations now have a “big picture,” and clear goals and objectives.

STRATEGY: Providing Statewide Leadership

The Vision: The year is 2010, and a large group of Vermonters are gathered in a conference hall for The Vermont Approach 5th Year Summit. The group has much to celebrate: Vermont has seen its first decline in sexual assault in a decade!

The meeting is facilitated by the Leadership Forum: a team of leaders from diverse anti-violence and abuse prevention organizations and agencies whose collaboration is characterized by mutual respect and trust. The facilitators provide insightful analysis of the successes and lessons learned from the past five years. Many of them had not had opportunities to work together on meaningful projects prior to The Vermont Approach.

Participants leave at the end of the day with a shared sense of purpose and a renewed commitment to their collaborative work to prevent sexual violence.

The Plan: Representatives of anti-violence and abuse prevention organizations will work together on the Leadership Forum of The Vermont Approach. Revitalizing collaborative statewide leadership on sexual violence prevention, the Leadership Forum will steer the development, coordination and implementation of many aspects of the plan. The Leadership Forum will be supported by a Vermont Approach Coordinator; other staff may be added as need and funding opportunities emerge.

The Vermont Approach was designed to provide a unified mission that all anti-sexual violence collaborators can embrace because it draws on their own missions and visions. Accountable, collaborative leadership will carry forward that unity of purpose, strengthening alliances and bringing more organizations, communities and individuals into the network of stakeholders committed to transforming our state and ending sexual violence.

Copies of The Vermont Approach are available upon request. For more information or to request a copy, contact the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence at 223-1302 or nsen@vtnetwork.org.
History of the Sexual Violence Prevention Project (SVPP)

In the summer of 2004 a group of sexual violence prevention stakeholders and allies met to discuss opportunities for revitalizing statewide leadership and vision for sexual violence prevention. Out of that meeting came a plan for a Sexual Violence Prevention Project which would bring together practitioners, leaders, researchers and experts to share resources, identify opportunities for statewide and local collaborations, and develop a plan for sexual violence prevention in Vermont.

While the Vermont Department of Health and the Vermont Network oversaw the project, the task of researching and creating the strategic plan was shouldered by the Anti-Violence Partnership: A Community Collaboration at the University of Vermont (AVP). A central goal of the Anti-Violence Partnership is to bring together academics and researchers with anti-violence practitioners for collaborative projects.

Dr. Susan Roche, faculty chair of the AVP and a professor in the UVM Department of Social Work, took on the project, first conducting a literature and internet search on sexual violence prevention. This research informed the design of the statewide conference, Crossing the Lines: Vermont Sexual Violence Prevention Summit, which took place in June of 2005. The next step was to conduct individual interviews and focus groups. The research culminated with a Strategic Planning Summit in December of 2005. Dr. Roche then synthesized the concepts and information she had gathered into The Vermont Approach, which was released in early 2006.

Organizations that contributed to the SVPP and/or The Vermont Approach include the following*:

- Vermont Department of Health
- Anti-Violence Partnership at the University of Vermont
- Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
- Women’s Rape Crisis Center
- Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
- Safespace
- Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
- Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs at the VDH
- Outright Vermont
- Norwich University
- Vermont Police Academy
- Vermont Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Abuse
- Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations
- University of Vermont Department of Social Work
- Vermont Department of Corrections
- St. Michael’s College Psychology Department
- Gedakina
- Domestic Abuse Education Project at Spectrum Youth and Family Services
- Vermont Department of Education
- Vermont Department for Children and Families
- Project Against Violence Encounters
- New Beginnings
- Washington County State’s Attorney’s Office
- Vermont House of Representatives
- Vermont Victim/Survivor of Crime Council
- SafeArt
- Women Helping Battered Women
- Adult Protective Services
- O.U.R. House of Central Vermont
- Vermont Press Bureau

* The law and UVM policies prohibit revealing the identities or affiliations of individuals who participated in the interviews and focus groups that comprised the Sexual Violence Prevention Planning Study.
Second Annual Red Flag Campaign

On April 25th, community members, survivors, advocates, and allies from around Vermont gathered at the statehouse to pay tribute to the estimated 3,255 people victimized by sexual violence perpetrators in Vermont in 2005.

- Red and white flags were raised; the white flags represented a 20% increase in incidents of sexual violence reported to law enforcement in 2005.

- Members of the Vermont Victim/Survivor of Crime Council read statements from agencies that respond to sexual violence:
  - Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE)
  - Municipal Law Enforcement
  - Department of Corrections Victim Services
  - Center for Crime Victim Services Victim’s Compensation Program
  - State’s Attorneys Victim Advocates
  - State Police, Investigators
  - Department of Corrections Sex Offender Program
  - Legislators
  - Vermont Network Member Program Advocates

- While each of the people represented by these flags is engaged in the private journey of healing, the ceremony emphasized our collective responsibilities to engage ourselves in the public journey of preventing this epidemic of sexual violence.

- The Flag Ceremony was followed by the 13th Annual Crime Victims’ Rights Week Award Ceremony, co-hosted at the statehouse by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services.

The Network Office Welcomes Anne Smith

Greetings! While I am new to the Network Office staff, my contact with the Network has been continuous since I started as a full time advocate for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence at WomenSafe in Middlebury in 2000. I grew tremendously as a person, advocate, and educator while working at WomenSafe and relied heavily on the skills I had gained there when I became UVM’s first Coordinator of Advocacy and Violence Prevention Services. I continued to work closely with the Network Office and Programs, as well as other community programs, while increasing UVM’s capacity to meet the needs of student, staff and faculty victims and survivors through coordinated services and education.

Now, after brief departure to the flatlands, I am very excited to be back in Vermont and part of the Network again as the Safe Havens Project Coordinator. In this project I am helping Supervised Visitation programs across our state improve and increase their outreach and services to victims and survivors and by providing technical assistance, facilitation, and coordination. I am thrilled to be able to contribute my knowledge and experience to this project and to the communities across Vermont.
Why Transitional Housing?

By the staff of Women’s Crisis Center, Brattleboro, Vermont

One of the biggest barriers women face when fleeing abuse is finding safe, permanent, affordable housing. Housing is difficult to find, period, but women living with abuse have a unique set of obstacles due to the consequences of their partner’s abuse: poor or non-existent landlord references, credit references and economic resources. Often women are forced to choose between the dangers of home and the dangers of homelessness. Studies show that more than 50% of homeless women and children are homeless due to domestic violence and 38% of all victims of domestic violence will be homeless at some point in their lives.

Shelters and safe homes provide emergency, short term housing but shelter beds are limited. A woman staying in a shelter or safe home has somewhere between a few nights to, at most, a few months to find housing, income, childcare if she has children, transportation, etc. How many of us could rebuild our lives in so short a time? Not surprisingly, many women are unable to secure permanent housing before leaving shelter. For some, the only option is to return to a batterer.

Transitional housing can buy time. Programs usually last between six months and two years, providing a bridge between emergency housing and permanent housing while meeting the individual needs of women.

Six Network Programs currently offer transitional housing to women in their communities. The type of housing varies, as does the range of support services. Housing can be at a single location, at scattered sites, or through some sort of rental assistance. The support services may consist of childcare, financial assistance, and/or support groups.

There is no “one size fits all” transitional housing program, but all provide women with resources crucial to safety.
National Sexual Violence Statistics

• One in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually assaulted by age 18. (Finkelhor, David, et al. Sexual Abuse in a National Survey of Adult Men and Women: Prevalence, Characteristics, and Risk Factors, 1990.)

• Rape and sexual assault continue to be the least reported of all crimes: only 28% are reported to law enforcement officials. (Rennison, Callie M., Criminal Victimization 1999: Changes 1998-00 with Trends 1993-99. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, August 2000.)

• Research consistently shows that women with disabilities, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or class, are assaulted, raped, and abused at a rate two times greater than women without a disability. (Sobsey 1994; Cusitar 1994)

• For every 1,000 college women living on campus, 35 rapes happen every academic year. Fewer than 5% of these assaults are reported to law enforcement officials. (The Sexual Victimization of College Women. Published by the U.S. Dept. of Justice in December 2000.)

• Seven in ten rape and sexual assault victims know their attacker prior to the assault. (Rennison, Callie M., Criminal Victimization 1999: Changes 1998-00 with Trends 1993-99. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, August 2000.)

• Child-victims of rape know their offender prior to the incident 90% of the time. (Greenfeld, Lawrence A. Child, Victimization: Violent Offenders and Their Victims. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 1996.)

Sexual Violence Statistics in Vermont

• 1,236 total sexual offenses and rapes were reported to law enforcement in 2004. (2004 VT Crime Report)

• Experts estimate that one out of every seven adult women in Vermont has been the victim of forcible rape sometime in her lifetime – that’s more than 32,000 Vermonters. (Rape in Vermont: a Report to the State, Kilpatrick and Ruggiero, 2003)

• In 2004, there were 185 forcible rapes reported to law enforcement — an increase of more than 50% over 2003, and 20% compared to the previous five years. (2004 VT Crime Report)

• Based on Vermont police reports in 2004, on average more than three sex crimes are reported every day.

• In 2005, member Programs of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence served 1,016 victims/survivors of sexual violence throughout the state; 163 were children and youth under age 18. (VNADSV 2005 Annual Report)

• The average age of victims of incidents of rape that were reported to Vermont police is 21; almost half of these victims were under the age of 18. The victim and the assailant were known to each other in 99% of reported rapes, and in 25% of these crimes the victim and perpetrator were either family members or intimate partners. (2004 VT Crime Report)

• In Vermont in 2002, 508 children were substantiated victims of sexual abuse, an increase of 16.5% from 2001. (2002 Child Abuse and Neglect Statistics, Vermont Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services)
The State of Vermont, through its Agency of Human Services (AHS), has a workforce numbering upwards of 3,000 and is the state’s largest human services provider. Through the course of daily work AHS employees have direct contact with hundreds of domestic violence victims. The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (the “Network”) and AHS are collaborating on an initiative aimed at enhancing domestic violence policy and practice within AHS, institutionalizing domestic violence expertise within AHS and providing survivor-informed social services to end domestic violence. In 2005 the work of an agency-wide AHS Domestic Violence Task Force culminated in a document entitled Report on Domestic Violence Policy and Practice at the Vermont Agency of Human Services: Recommendations for Systems Change. This report, available at www.ahs.state.vt.us, has been endorsed by the AHS Secretary. The report includes an assessment of all domestic violence practices and policies within AHS departments and proposes a set of comprehensive recommendations for the future.

The future of the project is still unfolding; however, planning for implementation has begun to take shape. Plans include convening Commissioners’ Advisory Groups to attend to implementation of the report recommendations and integration of domestic violence policies and principles into the work of each department.

This collaboration involving domestic violence advocates and state employees on a broad scale is the first in the country. A multi-year effort funded by the Altria Group Inc., it will result in a safer Vermont for us all.

### Domestic Abuse and Mild Brain Injury

Every 23 seconds someone in the United States sustains a brain injury. In Vermont it is estimated that 6,000 people live with disabilities resulting from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Many with brain injuries, particularly mild injuries, are not identified for treatment — a serious concern for a woman being abused by a partner.

Studies indicate that blows to the face and head occur in 50% to 90% of domestic assaults. Battered women are more likely than the general population to have suffered repetitive head trauma. Repeated mild brain injuries over an extended period (months or years) can result in cumulative neurological and cognitive deficits; but when repeated in a short period (hours, days, weeks) the result can be catastrophic or fatal.

Researchers recommend that all battered women be regularly screened for TBI. For referral and assistance call the Brain Injury Association of Vermont at 1-877-856-1772.

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- Anne Smith
  Safe Havens Project Coordinator
- Natasha Sen
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- Dianne Jabar
  Legal Issues Coordinator
VERMONT NETWORK MEMBER PROGRAMS

*AWARE
P.O. Box 307, Hardwick, VT 05843
Hotline: 802-472-6463

*Battered Women’s Services and Shelter
P.O. Box 652, Barre, VT 05641
Hotline: 877-543-9498

*Clarina Howard Nichols Center (CHNC)
P.O. Box 517, Morrisville, VT 05661
Hotline: 802-888-5256

NEKCA Step O.N.E.
P.O. Box 1004, Newport, VT 05855
Hotline: 802-224-7837

New Beginnings
12 Valley Street, Springfield, VT 05156
Hotline: 802-885-2050 or 802-674-6700

Project Against Violent Encounters (PAVE)
P.O. Box 227, Bennington, VT 05201
Hotline: 802-442-2111

*Rutland County Women’s Network and Shelter (RCWNS)
P.O. Box 313, Rutland, VT 05701
Hotline: 802-775-3232

*Safeline
P.O. Box 446, Randolph, VT 05060
Hotline: 800-639-7233

*Sexual Assault Crisis Team (SACT)
4 Cottage Street, Barre, VT 05641
Hotline: 802-479-5577

Umbrella
970 Memorial Drive,
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
Hotline: 802-748-8141 or 748-8645

*Voices Against Violence
P.O. Box 72, Saint Albans, VT 05753
Hotline: 802-524-6575

*Women Helping Battered Women (WHBW)
P.O. Box 1535, Burlington, VT 05402
Hotline: 802-658-1996

*Women’s Crisis Center
P.O. Box 933, Brattleboro, VT 05302
Hotline: 802-254-6954 or 800-773-0689

*Women’s Information Service (WISE)
79 Hanover Street, Lebanon, NH 03766
Hotline: 603-448-5525

Women’s Rape Crisis Center
P.O. Box 92, Burlington, VT 05402
Hotline: 802-863-1236 or 800-773-0689

WomenSafe
P.O. Box 67, Middlebury, VT 05753
Hotline: 802-388-4205 or 800-388-4205
TTY: 388-9181

Statewide Hotlines:
[will connect you with closest local Program]
1-800-228-7395 (Domestic Violence)
1-800-489-7273 (Sexual Assault)