

High Victimization Numbers May Not Reflect Extent of Abuse

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and a recent study has shed some light on alarmingly high victim numbers in Kodiak. Rebecca Shields is the executive director of the Kodiak Women's Resource and Crisis Center and said a survey was conducted within the Kodiak Island Borough to help provide a baseline of information.

-- (Domestic Violence 1 :38 “The survey came to Kodiak because Kodiak is one of the pilot sites for the governor's initiative on solving domestic violence and sexual assault. And so what they wanted to do was create a baseline and see where the Kodiak community is right now. And so the survey itself was done through UAA. So the Kodiak Women's resource and Crisis Center, along with KANA and along with Providence Kodiak Mental Health Center worked together to prepare the community for this type of survey because the survey was very in depth.”)

Phone calls were made to women in Kodiak who had either a land line or a cell phone. Shields said this along with the fact that the phone calls were only conducted in English means that the results of the survey are very conservative conclusions. She said that fact is staggering once you look at those numbers.

-- (Domestic Violence 2 :31 “Of the people surveyed, out of every 100 adult women in Kodiak 38 have experienced intimate partner violence. Twenty-three have experienced sexual violence and 44 out of every 100 have experienced one or both. Those are very sobering numbers. And again to keep in mind that the sampling is sampling people who speak English only and or have access to a telephone.”)

She said the numbers could very well be a lot higher if women not in those categories were contacted because they are often at a higher risk for domestic violence. She said the study provides a baseline of information so that the community can work to lower those numbers in the years to come.

-- (Domestic Violence 3 :32 “So this information is a baseline and it tells us where Kodiak is right now, currently. And so what the hope is that as part of our pilot projects and part of the work that we're doing in prevention efforts and in education and outreach efforts that we can see a change in these numbers. And so in another five years we'll have a second survey and hopefully we're going to see some of these numbers go down.”)

Police Chief T.C. Kamai said the results of the survey were shocking and he's thankful the survey was done and those numbers are out there.

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:45 "You know it's difficult to say at this point how the police department will use the data beyond knowing that there's a very high percentage and we believe of unreported domestic violence and crimes of sexual assault. For us it's just like what we try to do in the community. It's all about the awareness and raising the awareness level of it. And KWRCC and a few others do a tremendous job in taking on the lion's share of that work and raising the awareness and making people aware of the resources available to them. And so as far as the Kodiak police department is concerned we support that effort in any way and every way we can, whether it be making police officers available to work with advocates in actual cases or with working with KWRCC and their training when their selecting and training new advocates.")

The Kodiak women's Resource and Crisis Center kicked off domestic violence awareness month with a candlelight vigil last Monday to honor victims across the state. In addition to education and outreach throughout the month, shield said the center will host a "Paws for Peace" community dog walk toward the end of the month. She added that while the numbers are much lower, domestic violence does play to both sides of the spectrum and the KWRCC does provide services for men as well as women, including safe houses for male victims.

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