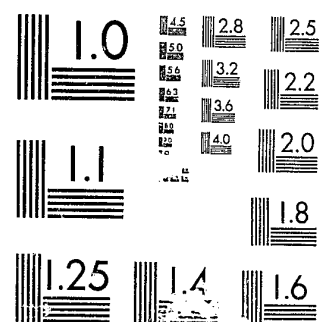


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FIRST YEAR EVALUATION OF  
HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT'S  
FAMILY ABUSE PROJECT

LEAA Grant # 77-DF-02-0010

Submitted on  
November 30, 1978  
by

Stephen J. Leeds

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CONSULTANT EVALUATORS

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## EVALUATORS' SUMMARY

The Family Abuse Project had a difficult time establishing itself within the Manhattan Family Court system, largely because of the initial antipathy of intake probation officers and the conflicting direction it received from its DCJS and LEAA monitors.

As a service program, the Project performed quite well within Manhattan Family Court for a limited caseload of abused women. As an agent of change, the Project accomplished little with regard to the Probation Department, but it may have pointed the way towards more effective and efficient utilization of the Family Court. As a research and information-gathering operation, the Project can only offer an assurance that the knowledge and familiarity now gained by staff should pay off during a second year of operation.

Available data show that the Project did not serve a cross-section of all family abuse victims entering the Family Court system. Rather, the Project served a group of abused wives who generally had little or no possibility of reconciliation with their husbands. Although Probation saw the Project as overly focused on the woman's needs, at the expense of her marriage, it may well be that the Project's typical client required just that approach. The Project's clients tended to have more children, be more abused, and come from more deteriorated family situations than other wives in the Court system. Thus, the Project's clients did not offer intake probation officers much to work with; and, as a consequence, Probation referred virtually all Project clients to Court after only the most minimal level of interaction.

While Court personnel especially appreciated the escort services provided clients by Project staff, they were also of the opinion that this service affected neither Court administration nor case outcomes. In fact, it appears that Project clients were three times as likely as the norm to obtain orders of protection and twice as likely to have the language of these orders tailored to their specific needs. Moreover, Project clients typically took up less of the Court's time in achieving these results.

The Project owed much of this success in Court to the time staff spent apprising clients of Court procedures and their options. The Project was also successful in helping clients meet their housing and shelter needs, but it accomplished less in other areas. Clients seem to have valued the Project's intervention on their behalf, since three-fourths of those who ever returned to the Family Court building after disposition of their original cases sought out the Project's aid once again.

## Introduction

Henry Street Settlement's Family Abuse Project commenced its first year of operations on September 15, 1977, funded by LEAA Grant #77-DF-02-0010. Accrual of funds permitted extension of the original grant period into November 1978. The primary objectives of the Project, as spelled out in the terms and conditions of the grant award, were:

(a) to improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system's response to the range of problems confronting family abuse victims through a program designed to provide victims with a range of crisis-oriented and reintegrative supports; and augment the limited range of existing solutions currently available through court intervention;

(b) to improve understanding and promote awareness about the family abuse problem and the needs of family abuse victims within the community, among legislators, and criminal justice and human service agencies whose constructive efforts may then better address the problem; and

(c) to provide information designed to expand the existing body of knowledge concerning family offense victims, the family abuse problem in the Manhattan Family Court, and the factors which adhere to the development of viable remedies for family offense victims.

To accomplish these objectives, the Project's main component, the Intake and Assessment Unit of professional and social work staff, was housed in the Manhattan Family Court to work in conjunction with the Department of Probation. Project staff were to interview victims of domestic violence and, as spelled out in the terms and conditions of the grant award, to

...orient and guide them through the court process, and discuss the availability of support services from the project. These services include emergency medical treatment, temporary shelter, short-term counseling, referral to legal services, general assistance with negotiating legal and bureaucratic procedures, and referrals to any other services the victim may require.

### Overall Research and Evaluation Effort

The approved evaluation plan for the first year's operation of the Family Abuse Project called for three major elements:

(a) development and utilization of forms to meet the needs of Project case management, interim reporting, and final evaluation;

(b) collection and analysis of baseline data regarding family offenses dealt with by the New York County Family Court and Probation Department; and

(c) end-of-year analysis of data collected above for assessment of Project functioning and for comparison of Project to baseline statistics.

Because of an unrealistically low budgetary allocation of \$2,400 for evaluation, Henry Street assisted the evaluators in securing additional funding in the form of a one-time grant of \$10,000 from the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation. A portion of this grant was earmarked "to support the evaluation of the Family Abuse Project," and the remainder is "to enable Henry Street to provide public policy direction on the issue of family abuse."

(Under the Foundation grant, the Family Abuse Project evaluation is to be integrated into an overall research effort which seeks to (1) document the extent and nature of spousal and other family violence in Manhattan, (2) examine the effects of model programs and services offered these victims, and (3) analyze the prosecution of abuse cases under both the traditional Family Court approach as well as the newer option involving the Criminal Court.)

At the outset of the first Project year, case management forms were developed by the evaluators in consultation with the Project staff. These forms were then tested and revised. They include:

(a) Intake Facesheet, containing client-identifying information, demographic and social characteristics, and a description of the nature and extent of family abuse alleged;

(b) Family Court Activity Sheet, containing procedural data related to the progress of the client's case through the New York County Probation Department and Family Court;

(c) Initial and Follow-up Contact and Service Sheets, containing descriptions of presenting problems, contacts, and services provided, including referrals; and  
(d) Daily Log Sheet, containing summary data regarding requests for information and training made by individuals and other agency personnel.

Also at the outset of the first project year, meetings were held with Probation and Court administrative personnel to obtain access to agency files for the purpose of developing the required baseline profiles of family offense cases. Several procedural delays impeded this effort; and the evaluators did not gain access to the Family Court's records until early March 1978, nor to the Probation Department's records until May 1978. When all necessary permissions had been secured, the evaluators spent almost a month in the various file rooms, meticulously reading through case records and extracting required information.

Data were collected from the records of 142 cases constituting a random sample of family offense cases entering the Family Court system from September 1, 1976, through January 31, 1977. By selecting a sample from that period, the evaluators are able to examine, retrospectively, case interaction with the Family Court system for a span covering over a year (i.e., the end of 1976 to almost the middle of 1978). The characteristics and Court interactions of these cases can thus be compared to those served by the Project from September 1977 through August 1978.

The information collected for the sample of 142 family offense cases has been edited and rationalized; and tabulations of demographic and interaction data have been made available in an independent report ("Family Offense Cases in the Family Court System: A Statistical Description") appended to this evaluation. While the appended report constitutes only a descriptive analysis, it should be stressed that even at this level there exist

practically no other reliable figures, published or unpublished, regarding the people who turn to the New York Family Court system on family offense matters and the processes these people go through.

Towards the end of the first Project year, the case management data collected by Project staff were compiled and analyzed by the evaluators, so that Project cases and outcomes could be compared to baseline cases and their outcomes. This information was supplemented by interviews with Court and Probation agency staff, as well as with several clients. All the foregoing has been incorporated into the following pages, which comprise the first year evaluation of the Family Abuse Project.

It is recommended that the appended report be read prior to continuing on with other sections of the evaluation. The appended report describes the setting and procedures of the New York County (i.e., Manhattan) Family Court, and it defines terms and conventions also used in the remainder of the evaluation.

#### How the Project Was Seen by Others

This section of the evaluation focuses on views of the Family Abuse Project held by officials and staff members of agencies in the Family Court. Interviews were held mainly with intake probation officers and their supervisory personnel, since they were the primary focus of interaction anticipated in the original grant award. Several Court officials, including a judge, were also interviewed, and their views are reported further on, as are the opinions of four clients served by the Project.

#### Interaction with the Department of Probation

The original Family Abuse Project proposal envisioned a large-scale services project to include either referrals or provision of health care, legal services, long-term intensive counseling, crisis intervention, direct access to emergency shelters and a corp of volunteers to assist clients at different stages of court proceedings. In late 1977, when a scaled-down version of the Project was implemented because of decreased funding, this change in the scope of the Project was not sufficiently communicated, according to probation personnel.

A period of misunderstanding followed during which probation officers did not receive clarification of exactly what substantive changes the Project was to undergo as a result of the reduced funds. After mid-1978, probation staff finally were given to understand that the Project had a research base and objective and that the Project, through the combination of its work and the evaluation of its work, would produce new information about people using the services of the Probation Department and the Family Court and the human service needs of these people.

Had the distinction between the original intent (full service) and the subsequent focus (research) been made clear earlier to probation officials, they claim that they would

have been more forthcoming and cooperative, since they too were interested in knowing more about the people using the Court and their resource needs. Probation staff partly explain their reluctance to assist the Project and the early research effort by the lack of clear expression in the Project of the objectives and techniques it wished to pursue. It should be noted that confusion about the Project's scope and goals was also promoted by LEAA; national evaluators sent down to look at the Project were unaware of the fact that it had been funded at a reduced level of operation.

Probation officials thought the incidence of serious physical spouse beating was being overestimated, as the numbers used in popularizing the issue had been based on a 1974 study which did not clearly define "battering." Moreover, they pointed out that family abuse cases, in total, constitute only a minor part of Probation's caseload, with juvenile offenses and support payment cases among adults far outnumbering family offense matters. This perception led probation staff to consider the emphasis on the one issue of wife-beating and the amount of discussion and preparation accompanying implementation of the Project to be out of proportion. There are signs that the sudden public concern with the spouse abuse problem and the rapid implementation of programs to deal with it created concerns for established institutions such as the Probation Department which had been coping with family abuse for years before the public spotlight fell on the matter.

Probation staff did not view their current family abuse activities as failing. While ostensibly welcoming both service programs which enlarged upon their effort and research projects which promised remedial information (which the Project was at different stages), they could not help but view the Project as judgmental insofar as it was designed to deal with a problem they did not acknowledge as being beyond their capability to handle. Moreover, according to probation officials, serious

physical abuse cases had always been referred to the Criminal Court, and outside agencies ought to direct their attention to the problems of abused spouses in that forum. Probation staff all continue to be committed to seeing family abuse in the context of the other matters with which they must deal.

In general, probation personnel confess to being skeptical and a "hard sell" for new projects offering services in the Court system. They specifically criticize the Family Abuse Project for not being initially aware of how to confront the problem all new projects face: demonstrating the efficacy of their services to probation intake officers from whom referrals must come. Probation personnel said new projects don't get referrals "merely because they are here" and new services must establish a "track record." Probation officers feel they would be remiss in discharging their own responsibilities if they refer clients to services in which they did not have confidence.

To overcome the problem of being a new untried service, probation staff suggest that the Project should have engaged in an outreach campaign to convince workers to make referrals. This approach could have consisted of visits by Project staff with each intake worker, holding workshops, and in general engaging in activities designed to produce referrals. Instead, the Project "naively" waited for referrals to materialize without actively soliciting them. Paradoxically, probation officers said that if they understood that the program was to be research-oriented, they would have been more inclined, originally, to make referrals.

Probation officers maintain that good referral resources are invaluable to them in their work, but the burden is on the agency seeking referrals to show that their services are useful. The Family Abuse Project remained aloof from routine interaction with probation intake staff and other referral agencies, apparently--according to probation staff--on the grounds that they ought to be given referrals because their intentions were good and they were "there."

This referral problem is indicative of what the Family Abuse Project and the Probation Department now agree was a period of internal development for the Project accompanied by somewhat undue suspicion on the part of the probation officers. What these officers hard-headedly call their skepticism about untried services, they candidly admit to be a fear of things unknown. New projects seem to be a judgment and have to be rationalized. Neither what appears to be the self-righteousness of new projects, nor the deliberate obstructionism of the existing institution, is unique to observers of the interactive process generally at work between bureaucracy and outside agency.

The Family Abuse Project probably would have been more forthcoming about marketing its services to probation personnel in the early months of the Project, if it were clearer itself on its own objectives. And part of this lack of clarity resulted from conflicting signals received from both the DCJS and LEAA monitors. Lacking clarity, Project staff fell back on portraying the Probation Department as obstructionists when perceiving Probation's reflexive resistance to new service providers. In sum, probation officials say the Project did not adhere to the rules governing the behavior of new projects seeking referrals, while admitting they give new programs a hard time partly out of fear of those projects. This attitude on the part of Probation is not inconsistent with the fact that in recent years the Family Court and the agencies that work within it have received a great deal of criticism in the media and by other public bodies. In effect, Probation is somewhat gun-shy.

#### Probation's View of the Family Abuse Project's Services

The Shelter. It had been originally understood by probation staff that they would have immediate, direct access to the Shelter for abused women and their children being operated by Henry Street. However, by other agreement a crisis intervention program called AWAIC had been given the responsibility of

screening referrals to the Shelter. This meant that probation officers either had to refer cases directly to AWAIC or had to route them through the Project, which then referred them to AWAIC. In either circumstance, there was no direct relationship with the Shelter.

The probation officers felt denial of direct access to the Shelter took away one of the unique advantages of working with the Family Abuse Project. The provision of shelter services had been the single most significant nonjudicial response to the furor over battered women. In both symbolic and real terms, Henry Street's Shelter for victims of abuse was regarded as a major addition to the array of services available to these women. When probation officers understood they would have to queue up, along with other referral sources, for access to the Shelter, this deflated the value of the Project for them.

Ironically, probation personnel, based on their own experiences, downplayed the potential value of the Shelter. The one special use probation officers wanted to make of the Shelter was for emergency overnight purposes. However, Henry Street's Shelter was meant to be a longer-term facility, where women would have time to consider their next steps and reintegrate their lives. Most cases were expected to reside there for a few months. In any event, probation officers ended up making few efforts to place women in the Shelter.

The Counseling Service. Probation staff regard the counseling service of the Family Abuse Project as of routine quality, with several negative exceptions. Compared to Home Advisory Services, another agency linked up with the Probation Department, the Family Abuse Project had no evening hours of community-based services. Project staff kept business hours; and, while this was not unusual for private agency operations, it did not cast them in an especially favorable light with probation personnel, who at times seemed willing to find fault in any new service, for reasons suggested above.

The probation officers also ranked the Project low on follow-up, at least as measured by the regularity with which it filed status reports with Probation on referred clients. This may seem a minor matter, in its own right, but probation personnel stated that the Family Abuse Project did poorly in this regard when compared to other agencies performing similar services.

Probation personnel believed that the Project maintained a small caseload. Since no norms or standards were established in the beginning phase, their concerns in this area go back to their experience with other agencies. The Project caseload was a function of the type of services offered and, more importantly, the number of workers available to carry cases. Moreover, the Project was performing a research function, while dealing with cases; and this activity was not always obvious to the Probation Department.

In general, probation staff held the Project in low esteem while never doubting the sincerity or motivation of its staff. The problems mentioned in this segment are related to ways of doing business and understanding and expectations on the part of probation staff, based on their past experiences with other agencies. It is fair to say that these criticisms of the Project are important, but are on matters readily modified. The first point, on hours and community services, is not so much a criticism of the service as of the plan for the services since the Project never said it would keep extended hours or be housed in the community. Record-keeping and caseload issues can be corrected, if necessary, by administrative changes and more funds for personnel.

Of more substantive importance, the probation officers were critical of what they understood the Project's position to be on the matter of family counseling. Probation tries to take the "family" as the client and considers one objective of its services to be restoration of the marriage. Probation staff

said the Family Abuse Project made it clear that it wished to view the woman, not the family, as the focus of service. Probation staff thought there was an unwarranted "fear factor" in the Project's unwillingness to try to bring the man and woman together through counseling; and they were scornful of this from both the point of view of practice and the perception of political reality.

In this issue, a distinct clash of approaches in dealing with family abuse is evident. The most recent focus on spouse abuse emphasizes the development of alternatives for the battered spouse (usually a woman). In principle, service to the woman is aimed at giving her leeway to consider her choices and providing her with the capability to carry out her decisions. However, counseling leading to divorce, or to establishment of a new home for the woman, is not intended to restore the marriage. Basing its approach on the view that many women tolerate repeated incidences of abuse because they do not have the information or support to leave the home, the Project concentrates its efforts on what is best for the woman. It is understandable, in this context, that termination, rather than restoration, of the marriage is often the agreed-upon solution. For probation staff, this change in signals is not readily acceptable.

Escort Service. Probation personnel acclaim the Project's service of providing escorts for clients as they wend their way to the various offices and tribunals connected with the Family Court system. They said it was the single best activity of the Family Abuse Project. Project staff not only physically accompany the client, but explain the purpose of each step in the process and assist the client as she copes with each decision.

#### Progress in Dealing with the Probation Department

In the second half of the Project year, the number of referrals from the Probation Department to the Project sharply increased. This occurred as a result of a series of meetings

among Probation, Family Court, LEAA and Project staff. Misunderstandings that had developed because of changes in the original Project plan were dealt with, and it was agreed that Probation would send more clients to the Project.

In retrospect, probation personnel acknowledged that the problems they had with the Family Abuse Project, which are reflected above, came about because of confusion over the scope of the Project, the natural antipathy an established agency has toward a new agency performing somewhat similar services, and an ongoing communications problem between the two units partly stemming from the differing philosophies of the principals and partly due to problems the Project had in making clear its objectives to probation personnel. It is fair to say that interaction between probation and Project staff is at a higher level now than nine months ago. It is too early to tell if the probation officers will alter their views of the services rendered by the Project until they have had further exposure to them based on their new relationship.

#### Interaction with the Family Court

Family Court personnel point out that the Court is an impartial, deliberative body, not engaged in advocacy, therefore not necessarily in the best position to evaluate a project dedicated to providing aid to petitioners. Officials of the Court did recommend to the administrative judge that he grant approval for the Project to operate within the Family Court when the Project was originally proposed. Court officials have thus been aware of the Project since its inception and most recall having been visited by Project staff who explained their purpose to them.

Family Court personnel believe the services rendered by the Project, with a single exception, do not substantially affect the administration of the Court. However, they agree that the counseling service and the availability of the Shelter are useful additions to the Court's options. The Court system does

not provide for monitoring or tracking cases for the purpose of assessing the impact of different service activities, so no systematic analysis of the value of different agencies or different approaches is made.

The one area where Court personnel clearly saw the Project's beneficial influence was in the petition room, where the escort service accompanied clients drawing up petitions. Court officials said that Project personnel expedited the petition process by preparing the petitioner before the petition was drawn. This enabled the petition clerks to complete their tasks more rapidly and effectively. This does not, they say, necessarily influence the outcome of the proceeding.

Petition room personnel found the Project useful and regarded the Project's personnel as professional, helpful to clients, and fully integrated into their work.

When all the parties met in June of 1978, Family Court officials say that they reiterated their commitment to the Project and informed judges and other appropriate parties of the special features of the Project. They encouraged different units within the Court to make referrals to the Project. They believe now that the outstanding problems have been resolved and that the flow of clients from Probation and the Court will increase. They are pleased that their reports show this is happening, since Family Court officials also take the view that new projects should have to demonstrate capability before they assume significant responsibilities. They see the Court as a deliberative institution which should change slowly to avoid making mistakes.

Family Court officials are supportive of the Project and of the Project personnel. They would like to see it continued and expanded, if possible, because they think it will help the Court to operate more effectively. If the counseling and referral services are successful, they believe the number of appearances at Court by clients will be reduced. As one official put



it, "There are many services available in child welfare and juvenile cases, but very few for adults."

#### Interaction with Clients

Clients came to the Project through the Family Court, Probation, AWAIC, Legal Services and other referral sources. It appears, from interviews with several clients, that they were highly satisfied with the services offered them by staff.

Clients referred from the Court or from Probation indicated that they were sent, in part, because they made excessive demands on the system. For example, one woman stated that Court personnel told her that her problem was not serious enough to warrant an order of protection; she was told to return when her spouse's threats of violence materialized. After constantly insisting that her fears were causing her emotional stress and that she strongly believed she needed an order of protection, she was referred to the Project. Another client expressed dissatisfaction with the language on the order she had secured because it did not enable her to get custody of her child. After much discussion with Court staff, she also ended up being referred to the Project.

These clients said that Court personnel did not want to deal with the issues they were raising nor with their insistent demands. They felt they were referred to the Project because they had made trouble. Two other clients who came to the Project from programs outside the Court saw their referrals as constructive steps in meeting their needs.

The services offered to clients can be divided into those relating to Court proceedings and those dealing with external issues. With respect to the former, clients described the escort service as the most helpful. In providing this service, staff often acted as advocates for the clients in the system's proceedings; they articulated client positions to the judges and they assisted in the drafting of special conditions for orders of protection. They did much more than just help clients nego-

tiate the bureaucracy, they represented them in Court matters.

Clients emphasized that Probation and Court personnel made them feel guilty about bringing their spouses to Court, as if it were violative of the marriage, and implicitly encouraged them to return home to try and reconcile differences. These clients felt that such advice was not helpful after they had mustered the resolve to bring the matter to Court. What they wanted was support for their decision, what they felt they received was criticism. This is a crucial matter. Probation personnel have stated that reconciliation of the spouses is one of their goals; but clients say that approach can foster guilt and uncertainty in the client at precisely the point when she has made up her mind to act on a matter of profound importance to her.

Project staff specifically supported the client's decision to obtain an order of protection or a divorce. They regarded it as their role to help the client articulate and achieve her goals; and if reconciliation was not her objective, they did not emphasize it.

All clients stated that they received assistance from the Project in obtaining legal counsel to secure divorces, separations, and in related matters. With respect to counseling, clients had different needs. Some maintained an intensive relationship for short periods and felt that the counseling was vitally important to them during periods of acute stress; others simply did not need a great deal of counseling support.

The clients interviewed seemed articulate and knowledgeable about their experience in the Court system. They all spoke of the services rendered them as indispensable during that period. It is too early to assess the longer-range impact of the Project's intervention on the clients; but they all indicated that they would have no hesitation in going to the Project again, as the need arose.

### How the Project's Clients Fared in Family Court

This section of the evaluation examines the Project's performance regarding its objective of improving "the criminal justice system's response to the range of problems confronting family abuse victims." In the following pages client management information about Court activity, as collected by Project staff, is analyzed and compared to the baseline statistics contained in the appended report.

Data were compiled from Project files for all clients who first contacted the Project before mid-August 1978 and who either had been assisted through the complete Court process or had been otherwise terminated from Project service by mid-October 1978. A total of 94 Project clients meet this criterion; but seven of these were subsequently omitted from analysis because their service needs had not involved family abuse. (Most had requested assistance on solely support-related issues.) Sixty of the remaining 87 clients whose records were analyzed had come to the Project in connection with a proceeding in, or a referral to, the Manhattan Family Court building.

The other 27 clients had family offense cases in other Family Courts (N=7), had family offense matters that were eligible for but not brought to any Family Court (N=14), or were outside the Family Court's purview by virtue of either their legal relationship to their abuser or their previous choice of a different forum (e.g., Criminal Court) for handling the abuse (N=6). Most of these 27 clients came to the Project in its formative stage, when initial outreach efforts generated a response from a wide range of family abuse victims and the agencies serving them. As the Project grew more focused on its research objective and as practical considerations implicit in its location in the Manhattan Probation Intake Branch both served to limit staff activity in other areas, clients from the Manhattan Family Court system increasingly made up the Project's caseload.

Over all, the 87 clients came to the Project by a variety of routes. Almost two-fifths were referred by the Family Court and its Probation Department; and another fifth came by way of City hospitals and mental health centers or private social agencies like Henry Street Settlement. The major woman's group making referrals was Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC).

<u>Referral Source</u>	<u>Project Clients</u>
Family Court	21%
Probation Dept.	17
City or social agency	20
Women's group	17
Self-referral	15
Lawyer, legal services	10
Total	100% (87)

Of the 60 Project clients that were involved in the Manhattan Family Court system, just over half had been referred to the Project by Court and Probation personnel; and just under half had been referred to the Court or Probation by the Project. One judge accounted for nine in ten referrals to the Project from the Family Court; and one probation officer accounted for half that agency's referrals to the Project.

Almost all the Project's clients from outside the Manhattan Family Court system initially contacted staff by telephone, but this was true of only 11 of the other 60 clients. In fact, 21 of the 27 clients from outside the Manhattan Family Court system were never seen in person by Project staff, and the remaining six were all seen but once. Furthermore, 14 of the 27 had just one contact--whether by phone or in person--with Project staff. Essentially, these 27 clients required information and sometimes referral, but very little in the way of other services. For these clients, the Project amounted to little more than a "hot-line." The cases of two in every three were terminated by Project staff as being program "dropouts"

(i.e., they had not been heard from for at least two months). Therefore, discussion and analysis in the following pages centers on the 60 Project clients involved in, or referred to, Manhattan Family Court (the Project's "service" clients).

Who Was Served in Manhattan Family Court?

The clients assisted in the Manhattan Family Court system by Project staff did not represent a cross-section of all family offense petitioners utilizing that Court system. The Project's emphasis on spouse abuse resulted in all but two of its clients being women and in almost all these women being the wives of their abusers. (In three cases, a common-law relationship existed which nevertheless was qualified for Family Court treatment as part of a paternity determination.) Thus, the Project's service clients conform closely to that group of Family Court petitioners referred to as "spouse cases" in the appended report. For this reason, whenever the Project's service clients are examined in relation to the Family Court's in the following pages, this comparison is with the spouse cases rather than with all family offense cases passing through the Court system. (A fourth of all family offense cases do not involve spouses, but are between parents and their older children or between adult siblings.)

In many ways, the clients assisted in the Manhattan Family Court system by the Project represent a cross-section of the abused wives utilizing that system. The Project's clients have virtually the same ethnic, age, residency, and citizenship profiles as other Court petitioners. (See Tables 2b, 2c, 2g, and 2h in the appended report.) The Project's clients were somewhat less likely than is generally true to be in the labor force and to have a husband in the labor force, but Project clients were somewhat more likely to have their own income because a greater proportion were on welfare. Two of five Project clients with their own income reported more than \$100 weekly being available, as compared to over half of all family

	<u>Project Service Clients</u>	<u>Court Spouse Cases</u>
•Petitioner Currently Working or Unemployed	37%(60)	49%(100)
•Husband Currently Working or Unemployed	72%(50)	89%(101)
•Petitioner Worked Sometime Recently	44%(59)	53%(98)
•Petitioner Has Own Income	75%(57)	65%(94)
•Petitioner Receives AFDC	32%(59)	19%(99)

offense petitioners. Yet the Project appeared to serve a relatively larger group of abused women in the better-paying professional and managerial occupations than does the Court.

One significant area of difference between Project and Court cases is to be found in regard to their family situations. Project clients were more likely to have a greater number of children in the home, to have been married longer, and, if separated, to have been living apart from their spouses for an intermediate length of time (i.e., 1-11 months).

	<u>Project Service Clients</u>	<u>Court Spouse Cases</u>
•Three Or More Children in Home	31%(58)	18%(106)
•Married 6-10 Years	32%(50)	20%(103)
•Married 11+ Years	30%(50)	22%(103)
•Living Apart From Spouse	63%(60)	54%(110)
•For Those Living Apart:		
-Separated 1-11 Months	33%(33)	14%(58)
-Separated 1+ Years	15%(33)	34%(58)

The differences in family situations evident above contribute in no small way to the higher welfare reciprocity rate found among Project clients.

The Project's service clients were more often the victims of multiple assaults than comparable Court petitioners, and the

worst of these assaults involved relatively more in the way of punching, kicking and choking. Non-physical abuse profiles are fairly similar for Project and other Court clients.

	<u>Project Service Clients</u>	<u>Court Spouse Cases</u>
• Not Physically Assaulted	18% (57)	22% (108)
• Assaulted Twice Or More	63% (57)	47% (108)
• Most Severe Assault, For Those Assaulted:		
-Punched, Kicked, Choked	67% (46)	56% (84)
-Clubbed, Stabbed, Or Shot At	9% (46)	14% (84)
• Not Abused Non-physically	30% (57)	34% (108)
• Abused Non-physically, Twice Or More	51% (57)	44% (108)
• For Those Abused Non- physically:		
-Threatened with Harm Or Murder	64% (39)	61% (71)

Project staff were much more apt than probation officers to identify alcohol and mental illness as contributory factors in the abuse suffered by their clients. Conversely, Project staff less frequently reported infidelity, separation or abandonment as factors. And Project staff mentioned some previous contact between police and client twice as often as do probation officers in their records.

	<u>Project Service Clients</u>	<u>Court Spouse Cases</u>
• For Those with Contributing Factors:		
-Alcohol	51% (41)	37% (94)
-Infidelity	17% (41)	27% (94)
-Separation, Abandonment	10% (41)	26% (94)
-Mental Illness	17% (41)	3% (94)
• Any Prior Police Contact	47% (60)	22% (110)

Of course, some of the differences revealed above may simply reflect variations between Project staff's and probation officers' thoroughness in recording information in their respective files. Based on the available information, one must conclude that the Project's clients, when compared to the other abused wives seeking help in the Manhattan Family Court system, were quite similar demographically but somewhat dissimilar in terms of their family functioning and patterns of abuse.

#### How Did Clients Proceed Through Probation Intake?

Two overriding facts characterize the interaction between the Project's service clients and the Probation Dept. There was even less interaction between petitioners and intake probation officers than is normally the case; and the probation officers ended up referring virtually all the Project's clients to Family Court, compared to their normal Court-referral rate of 55 percent.

These findings should not be interpreted to mean that Project staff prevented the probation intake branch from adjusting cases. Probation frequently referred cases to the Project for escort services, in conjunction with referral to Court. Probation officers seem not to have referred cases they thought they could adjust; and the Court referred cases which, by definition, had not been adjusted (i.e., "diverted") by the Probation Department.

The appended report points out that petitioners sent on to Court by the probation intake branch are typically sent there right after the initial probation interview rather than after protracted counseling. Thus, since all Project clients seen by Probation were sent on to Court, a low level of client-Probation interaction is to be expected. However, since counseling rather than Court referral is generally scheduled by probation officers when they sense any possibility of reconciliation between spouses, one might conclude that the Project's clients--with their universal Court-referral rate--constituted a group of battered wives

having the fewest options available for dealing with their husbands. Further support for this conclusion is found in the fact that half the Project's clients had already been to Family Court in a previous proceeding--often more than 18 months prior to their present action. The logical extension of this train of thought is that, while Probation saw the Project as focusing too much on the woman, to the detriment of family reintegration, the Project's clients largely required just such an approach.

The pattern of minimal interaction between Project client and probation officer held true across the board, regardless of whether the client had been referred to the Project after Probation intake or whether the client had been first seen by Project staff and subsequently sent on to an appointment with the probation intake section. In this latter situation, the probation officers implicitly confirmed the Project's "emphasis on the woman" by referring three of every four Project clients to Court after their initial interview. No Project client had more than one recorded Probation intake after hooking up with the Project. The few clients who did return on a new matter all chose to bypass intake services for their second proceeding.

	<u>Project Service Clients</u>	<u>Court Spouse Cases</u>
•Petitioner Had One Probation Intake	85%(52)	62%(110)
•Petitioner Bypassed Probation Intake	15%(52)	11%(110)
•2+ Appointments Scheduled with Probation	18%(51)	49%(110)
•Respondent Ever Seen by Probation Officer	10%(50)	47%(110)
•Any Probation Conference Scheduled (Excluding Bypassers)	10%(42)	48%(96)

	<u>Project Service Clients</u>	<u>Court Spouse Cases</u>
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•Any Probation Referrals to Outside Agencies Other Than Henry Street (Excluding Bypassers)	7%(45)	17%(96)
•Received Probation Intake Services for Longer Than One Week (Excluding Bypassers)	5%(42)	27%(96)

How Did the Clients Proceed through Family Court?

Several overriding facts characterize the interaction between the Project's service clients and the Manhattan Family Court itself: Not only did 95 percent of the Project's clients get on the Court's docket (compared to 60% of all family offense intakes); but half managed to secure a final order of protection (compared to 18% of all intakes); and this was accomplished overwhelmingly in just one or two hearing dates.

The message behind these data is that the Project, while turning to the Court more frequently than Probation, nevertheless used the Court efficiently by making Project-assisted cases stick--and without protracted proceedings. Project clients were also half as likely as other petitioners to fail to appear at Court hearings. If a Project case was dismissed, this occurred typically as a result of an explicit withdrawal of the charges rather than a failure to prosecute.

While the following table demonstrates that a fourth of all abused spouses reaching Family Court obtain an order of protection, only three-fifths of those who originally enter the system manage to get to Court in the first place. Thus, over all, between a sixth and a fifth of family offense intakes generally result in final orders; so the Project's 54-percent rate is three times greater than the norm. Besides securing protection orders for such a large proportion of its clients, the Project also aided them in getting these orders tailored to their individual needs, through the inclusion of special

conditions. Over half the Project clients' protection orders contained special conditions, as compared to the normal rate of 25 percent.

	<u>Project Service Clients</u>	<u>Court Spouse Cases</u>
*Original Disposition of Court Case		
Dismissed	44%	64%
...Charges not substantiated	4	2
...Failure to prosecute	19	39
...Charges withdrawn	21	10
...Other	0	13
Final order issued	56	32
...Order of protection	54	25
...Order of support	2	4
...O/P and O/S	0	3
No disposition	0	4
Total	100% (48)	100% (69)

This greater initial effectiveness explains why Project clients were somewhat less likely than other comparable petitioners to return to the Court either on a new matter or for a supplementary proceeding related to their original action. Thus, Project-assisted clients took up less of the Court's time, both in their original proceedings as well as thereafter. Project clients were also somewhat more likely than other comparable petitioners to secure temporary protection orders and referral recommendations from the Court. As a

	<u>Project Service Clients</u>	<u>Court Spouse Cases</u>
*Two Or More Separate Cases on Court Docket	5% (55)	17% (82)
*Any Supplementary Proceedings on Original Court Case	11% (52)	17% (82)

	<u>Project Service Clients</u>	<u>Court Spouse Cases</u>
*Required One Or Two Court Hearing Dates	74% (50)	55% (82)
*Required Four Or More Court Hearing Dates	10% (50)	31% (82)
*Court Proceedings Took Longer Than Two Months	22% (49)	39% (82)
*Received Temporary Court Order	85% (54)	73% (82)
*Court Recommended Referral to Outside Agency Other Than Henry Street	30% (51)	20% (82)

result of supplementary proceedings stemming from violations of temporary and final protection orders, the Project assisted one client in having her husband jailed and another in having her husband placed on probation.

In contrast to the previously reported opinions of Family Court personnel, the assistance rendered a limited caseload of petitioners by Project staff does appear to have improved both the efficiency and effectiveness of Court proceedings. In the long run, such a trend--if allowed to proliferate--could conceivably impact on Court administration.

What the Project Offered to its Clients

This section of the evaluation addresses the Project's ability to "provide victims with a range of crisis-oriented and reintegrative supports; and augment the limited range of existing solutions currently available through court intervention." In the following pages, client management information collected by Project staff is analyzed and presented for both the 60 service clients and the total of 87. Differences between the service group and the total are attributable to the inclusion of the 27 "hot-line" clients in the statistics for the total.

The principal finding regarding the Project's performance is that, while Project staff dealt with and often successfully resolved a variety of crises and problems confronting clients, such activity was almost always ancillary to the central task of supporting clients through a Family Court proceeding. (Obviously, this was not so among the "hot-line" group, many of whom, by definition, were outside the Family Court's purview.)

Before contacting the Project, six of every seven Project clients had sought help elsewhere, often from two or more sources. Interestingly, most seemed to have been assisted to some degree during these previous encounters; yet they still came to the Project for assistance. Project records indicate

	<u>Service Clients</u>	<u>Total Clients</u>
*Previously Sought Help from:		
Manhattan Family Court	40%	29%
Police	33%	29%
Other court	12%	18%
City or social agency	37%	40%
Women's group	13%	17%
Lawyer, legal services	17%	15%
Women's shelter	15%	12%
	(60)	(87)

that almost all clients who had previously sought shelter services seemed to have been helped. Two-thirds of those

previously contacting Manhattan Family Court also had been aided, as was true for similar proportions of those contacting City or other social agencies (including hospitals, mental health centers, and the Department of Social Services), women's groups, and lawyers. Half of those previously in other courts felt they had been helped, but only a third of those who had sought police assistance reported being aided.

Upon initially contacting the Family Abuse Project, two in every three clients had legal problems, usually stemming from questions about their Family Court matters. Half stressed family relations problems as well, usually stemming from their spouse's behavior but often including their children's; and a third reported housing problems, usually stemming from a desire to establish separate living quarters or to move where they could not be located. Employment, health and welfare problems each troubled a sixth or less of the clients at initial contact.

Virtually all clients were given information and support during their first contact with the Project. In addition, about a third were escorted through a Court procedure; a fourth received intensive counseling; and a seventh were referred to other agencies. A fourth of the clients thereafter contacted the Project on only one other occasion, and half on two or more subsequent occasions. However, in-person contacts constituted only a portion of this interaction with clients. As mentioned previously, because of the very low level of staff interaction with the "hot-line" group, a fourth of all Project clients were never seen in person.

	<u>Service Clients</u>	<u>Total Clients</u>
*In-Person Contacts		
None	0%	26%
One	35	29
Two	42	29
Three	10	7
Four or more	13	9
Total	100%	100%
	(60)	(87)

Practically every client contact involved some element of counseling; but in-person sessions dedicated to a more thorough-going exploration of attitudes and options were attended by three-fifths of the service clients and a handful of the "hot-line" group. One service client in eight participated in at least two such counseling sessions.

Substantive contacts with other service agencies were made on behalf of three-fifths of Project clients, and the pattern was similar for both the service and "hot-line" groups. A fifth of the clients in both groups required at least three such collateral contacts, which most frequently involved legal, welfare or housing problems.

In addition to seeking assistance from outside agencies through collateral contacts, Project staff often referred clients to other agencies for direct provision of aid. Again, the referral pattern held across the board. Two clients in five were referred, but usually to just one other agency. A fifth of the clients were referred to the Department of Social Services for welfare aid and often for shelter clearance. An almost similar proportion were referred to Legal Services lawyers, two-thirds of the time for help with Family Court proceedings. A tenth each were referred to City or other social agencies and to women's groups. Five clients were referred to Criminal Court to institute proceedings in that forum, and three were sent to the police to seek enforcement of a court order.

Of all the clients referred to the Project from the Manhattan Family Court or from outside agencies for assistance in the Court, only a handful were diverted by staff from that forum. The Project's emphasis on the Family Court as the central feature of its service plan for almost every client (except those in the "hot-line" group) resulted in the widespread provision of Court escort services. Three clients were

escorted through Criminal Court, but three of every four service clients were escorted through Manhattan Family Court.

	<u>Service Clients</u>	<u>Total Clients</u>
*Number of Times Escorted in Court:		
None	23%	45%
One	33	25
Two	25	17
Three or more	18	13
Total	99% (60)	100% (87)

As might be expected, Project staff not only managed to work on the vast majority of the legal problems brought to them by clients, since most were related to Family Court, but also were quite successful in helping clients to resolve these problems. Project records indicate that three clients in four brought staff legal problems at one time or another; over half, family relations problems; and half, housing or shelter problems.

	<u>Service Clients</u>	<u>Total Clients</u>
*Clients Had Problems Related to:		
Legal	80%	76%
Family	55%	56%
Housing, shelter	51%	49%
Welfare, financial	23%	26%
Health	8%	8%
Training, employment	7%	5%
	(60)	(87)

Case records of the service clients indicate that Project staff helped resolve to some extent two of every three legal and housing problems--and, therefore, almost half the family relations problems--brought to their attention. Project staff also managed to help with most welfare problems, but with very few other financial, health, training, or employment problems. In other words, Project staff were able to provide assistance



and achieve positive results for those "concrete" problems most often brought to their attention.

Over half the Project's terminated service cases had been satisfactorily aided, and one in ten had been permanently referred to another agency for assistance. Only a third of the cases of the service clients were terminated by the Project for loss of contact (i.e., "dropping out") without any resolution of the immediate problem.

	<u>Service Clients</u>	<u>Total Clients</u>
* Reason for Termination		
Service plan completed	55%	44%
Referred to another agency	12	13
No contact (i.e., "dropout")	33	44
Total	<u>100%</u> (60)	<u>101%</u> (87)

As another way of confirming the Project's apparent overall success in assisting clients involved in the Manhattan Family Court system, an independent examination was conducted to identify instances of clients returning to Court without seeking the Project's help. In November 1978, Probation Department and Court records were compared to Project records for 45 clients who had had a case adjudicated in Court. Only three clients had ever returned to the Family Court building, after their initial case had been adjudicated, without informing Project staff; and none of these three had gone on to a Court hearing. Nine other clients had also returned on a new matter or in a supplementary proceeding, but each had then sought the Project's assistance. One might hypothesize that this reflects favorably on the Project's performance: Three out of four clients returning to Family Court valued the Project's former services enough to seek its aid once more.

**END**