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TRAINING OF MEDICAL & NURSING STUDENTS ON LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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**I. Project Description**

Since 1997, the Domestic Violence Committee of the North Carolina Bar Association Young Lawyer Division (the “NCBA YLD”) has participated in a day-long training of medical and nursing students from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (“UNC”) on the issues of domestic violence. The purpose of the seminar is to raise awareness among the students and train the students to screen for domestic violence in their patient populations and make referrals to agencies that can assist the victim by providing the students with an overview of the legal remedies for victims, as well as the legal reporting requirements of the medical professional. Members also explain how record keeping could assist in later prosecutions, outlining the various ways that medical records and testimony of the medical professional might later be admitted into evidence, and answer student questions.

**II. Project Planning/Development**

**A. Identification of Need**

A study conducted by the UNC Hospitals Domestic Violence Intervention Board found that one of the leading reasons that medical professionals do not address domestic violence with patients is lack of understanding of the legal issues. Medical students at UNC organize the seminar which includes training from victim advocates and medical school faculty. Initially, the medical students approached the North Carolina Medical Society’s Domestic Violence Task Force (the “Task Force”) for assistance in organizing the training. The Task Force was set up initially to create ways to train physicians on the issue of domestic violence in their practices. The Task Force requested members of the community from various fields, including law, victim advocacy, nursing and social work with a background in domestic violence issues to join the Task Force. The Chair of the NCBA YLD Domestic Violence Committee serves as a liaison to the Task Force and attends quarterly meetings of the Task Force. The NCBA YLD Domestic Violence Committee conducts similar workshops for emergency room personnel across the state and the Task Force felt it important to attempt to recreate the training done for other medical professionals.

**B. Determination of Project Goals and Design**

**1. Decisions to be made**

**a. Options – Project Goals**

The YLD committee members attempt to provide the students with an overview of the legal remedies for victims, as well as the legal reporting requirements of the medical professional. Members also explain how record keeping could assist in later prosecutions, provide handouts outlining the various ways that medical records and testimony of the physician might later be admitted into evidence and answer student questions.

**b. Options – Project Design**

The first step was to gather volunteers who felt comfortable speaking on the topics. A committee member with criminal domestic violence prosecution agreed to speak and a committee member with a family law specialty spoke on the civil implications. Both committee members produced written materials which outlined the basic rights of a domestic violence victim in both the criminal and civil systems. Further the committee members distributed a booklet produced by the Committee, entitled “Domestic Violence and the Law: A Practical Guide For Survivors.”

**2. Decision making process**

Committee Chair approached the Executive Council of the NC-YLD for approval in moving forward with the training. No further approval was required or needed.

**3. Considerations in project planning**

**a. Community Resources**

This project is a collaboration of many community organizations. A medical student organization provided much of the administrative work. A victim advocate organization presented background on the dynamics of abusive relationships and advised the students on helpful topics for the seminar. The medical students approached area restaurants for donations of light refreshments and lunch for the seminar.

**b. Personnel**

All persons involved in this project were attorney volunteers who were members of the YLD-Domestic Violence Committee. No administrative support was needed, although, organization of the copying of the materials could be done by administrative support. The training took place at the UNC-Chapel Hill Medical School and the medical students organized arranging for the location and interfacing with the medical school personnel.

**c. Revenue Availability/Fund raising**

The expenses involved were only copying expenses and totaled less than \$100.00 so funding was provided from YLD budget. Fundraising was not utilized.

**d. Other.** Both committee members produced written materials and the funding for copying was provided by both the N.C. Bar Association YLD Domestic Violence Committee funds as well as funding from the N.C. Medical Society Domestic Violence Task Force.

**III. Implementation...How to Replicate Your Project**

**A. Timetable**

The medical students pick a date for the training at least six months in advance which allows plenty of time to organize the legal training. The medical students contact the Committee Chair of the YLD-Domestic Violence Committee with the date. The Committee Chair then assigns the training to members of the YLD Committee. The Committee members then meet to discuss the training and preparation of written materials. Written materials are then reviewed and edited one month in advance of the training so that they will be ready for copying prior to the seminar.

- B. Recruitment and Training of Volunteers/Personnel**  
Volunteers were recruited from the existing Domestic Violence Committee of the YLD who met to discuss the issues that should be addressed. As the project continued from year to year, the YLD volunteers changed the presentation to include questions from students received in previous years.
- C. Publicity**  
The medical students handled all of the publicity and recruited participants using flyers and email announcements in the school to recruit students. The medical school gave extracurricular credit to the students for attending the seminar.
- D. Day-To-Day Operations**  
Each year the medical students transfer responsibility of the organization of the seminar to an incoming student. The student then contacts the YLD Committee Chair with available dates and the Chair assigns responsibility for the seminar to committee members.

#### **IV. Evaluation and Impact**

Consistently students have praised the legal portion of their training as the most helpful of the day-long seminar. Students participate by asking numerous questions and are very interested in how to modify their own note taking and interview of patients to later assist in prosecution of the domestic violence crime. The student participants were given surveys at the end of the seminar and asked to rank the helpfulness of each seminar throughout the day. Suggestions and comments given in these surveys are then used the following year.

#### **V. Bibliography/Other Resources**

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