



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Research Study

Giving Voice to the Unspeakable:
Documenting Domestic Violence in the
Chicago Jewish Community



Published by SHALVA

Dedication

This report is dedicated to all of the SHALVA clients and domestic violence survivors everywhere whose voices will no longer be silenced and whose courage inspires others to speak out.

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We would also like to express our gratitude to the research team from the University of Chicago and University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

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FORWARD

SHALVA is proud to present this Executive Summary which conclusively dispels the myth that “Jewish women do not experience domestic abuse.” Jewish women in the Chicago area of all religious denominations, socio-economic backgrounds and personal demographics have been served by SHALVA for 25 years. This research validates their experience and the experience of their families. It provides insight into the needs of our community and the work yet to be done.

By arriving at a deeper understanding of these trends and dynamics, SHALVA aims to establish dialogue on this important topic in order to create effective strategies for positive change in the Jewish and domestic violence communities.

SHALVA staff and Board of Directors are committed to preserving Shalom Bayit, peace in the home; that all Jewish families should be free of violence, coercion and verbal degradation. With that goal in mind, it is our hope that this study will serve as a tool to educate, guide and motivate individuals and community leaders in order to prevent, address and respond to domestic abuse in the local and national Jewish Community. We must recognize that fear, silence and misinformation about domestic abuse allows it to perpetuate. As a community, it is our responsibility to “Give Voice” to this important issue.

Janice Wahnou
Executive Director

Barbara Siegel
Clinical Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY of
SHALVA
Research Study

Giving Voice to the Unspeakable: Documenting Domestic Violence in the Chicago Jewish Community

Background

In recent years, there has been an increase in awareness, education and advocacy relating to domestic abuse¹. Despite the movement to raise the visibility of this topic in society as a whole, it is not a frequent topic of discussion in Jewish settings. Many do not believe that domestic abuse actually occurs in Jewish households. The silence on this topic has impaired the understanding of how domestic abuse impacts the Jewish community, thereby limiting the resources and services available for victims in the community.

As a result, many Jewish victims of domestic violence remain silent and do not come forward to ask for help. They are frightened, embarrassed, confused and isolated. If they decide to take action, they must make careful decisions about their safety, as well as that of their children. They are in need of education, options and information about where they can turn to for help.

What is SHALVA?

Founded in 1986, SHALVA is the oldest independent Jewish domestic violence services agency in the United States. Since its inception, the agency has provided more than 4,000 clients with culturally sensitive services. SHALVA serves Jewish families experiencing domestic abuse in the Chicago metropolitan area with the goal of restoring Shalom Bayit (peace in the home) for Jewish women and their children.² The agency offers clients free individual and group counseling, financial assistance, legal information and support, a 24-hour help line, rabbinical and community advocacy and training, community prevention and educational programs.

SHALVA is the only Jewish social service agency in the Chicago area specifically certified by the State of Illinois to provide domestic violence counseling services.

¹ Domestic abuse and domestic violence are defined as a systematic pattern of power and control for the sole purpose of manipulating a partner in an intimate relationship.

² As shown in the study, the majority of SHALVA clients self-identify as Jewish; however, anyone who calls receives assistance 24 hours a day (18% of SHALVA's clients are not Jewish).

Research Overview

To develop a comprehensive understanding of its clients and their needs, SHALVA partnered with the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago and the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department at the University of Massachusetts - Lowell to analyze all of the agency's records and client case files. The study provides profiles of SHALVA's clients, explains the types of abuse they experience, and the barriers and obstacles that these individuals face, as well as how being Jewish conditioned their experience.

Unprecedented look at Jewish Domestic Violence

The SHALVA study is the first comprehensive research of its kind in the Chicago area and is among very few nationally and internationally to explore the issue of domestic violence in the Jewish community.

The research results provide an unprecedented look into domestic violence within the Chicago area Jewish community that has relevance for the country and the world.

Much of the previous research on this subject has been conducted in Israel, which has limited value in the U.S., where Jews are in the minority (see Steinmetz and Haj-yahia, 2006; Sharhabani-arzy, Amir, Kotler and Liran, 2003). The few U.S. studies available often rely on smaller sample sizes (see Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte, 2007; DeVoe, Borges and Conroy, 2001). As of yet, no studies compare the experiences of Jewish domestic violence victims with domestic violence victims of other ethnicities, cultures or religions.

Completed in time for the agency's 25th anniversary, the project employed a quantitative and qualitative research methodology. SHALVA client case files were reviewed in strict confidence. (Please refer to the Appendix at the end of the Executive Summary for more detail about the research methodology. A separate Appendix contains the final statistics.)

SHALVA's research is intended to serve as a tool to educate, guide and motivate individuals and communities so they can prevent, address and respond to domestic abuse in the Jewish community. It also provides information and ideas for future investigative research on Jewish domestic violence. By arriving at a deeper understanding of these trends and dynamics, SHALVA aims to establish dialogue on this important topic in order to create effective strategies for positive change in the Jewish and Domestic Violence communities.

Impact on the Jewish community

The results of the study will aid SHALVA in advocating for client needs and guide the future direction of the agency. The analysis of SHALVA's clients and the type of abuse they have experienced is representative of the broader Jewish experience, and can be leveraged by all

Jewish communities. The research can serve as an educational resource for other domestic violence providers and therapists who strive to better understand cultural behaviors and sensitivities of Jewish clients. In sharing the study results, SHALVA hopes that this information will also be instrumental in increasing resources and empowering advocacy for policy change.

Summary of Findings

The Executive Summary presents important highlights of the full research study. Explaining the significant findings, this report will create a candid picture of Jewish domestic abuse experienced by clients since SHALVA's inception.

In the general population, one out of four women in the U.S. will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.³ It is estimated that for each person who seeks help, at least four or five remain silent.⁴ Comparable statistics are not yet available in the Jewish community, which represents 2.2% of the U.S. population.⁵

The SHALVA research dispels the myth that domestic abuse does not happen in Jewish households, as well as many other myths about Jewish women as victims of domestic abuse. If women do decide to take action, they must make careful decisions about their safety, as well as that of their children.

The impact of abuse and the barriers at an individual, family and community level motivate women to seek assistance, including legal support, counseling, and shelter/housing. The most common request is for instrumental aid, including legal, financial and children's services. Requests for shelter referrals are also frequently mentioned. Some clients are not even sure what type of help they need but know they need information.

Common characteristics

The women who contact SHALVA may have very similar needs, but they all have individual, unique circumstances. There is no typical SHALVA client; however, there are characteristics that are often consistent across Jewish domestic violence victims as seen by SHALVA.⁶

Almost all (98%) of SHALVA's clients are female. More than 50% of clients are between the ages of 25 and 45.⁷ They come from a cross-section of educational and economic backgrounds. Some are members of the gay/lesbian, bisexual and trans-gender communities.

³ National Institute of Justice of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000.

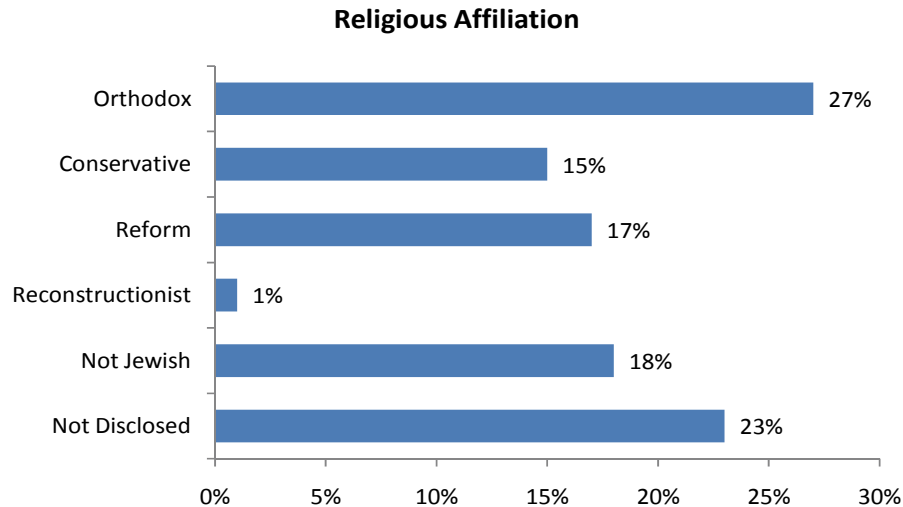
⁴ *Jewish Action*, Spring 5758/1998, Vol. 58 No. 3.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Statistical Abstract.

⁶ SHALVA clients are not required to disclose personal information during crisis intervention or counseling.

⁷ SHALVA research study, page 40.

Women utilizing SHALVA's services represent every denomination within the Jewish spectrum, including Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist and unaffiliated.



- Religious affiliation⁸ – 27% are Orthodox, 15% are Conservative, 17% are Reform, 18% are not Jewish, and 23% chose not to disclose a particular affiliation.
- Education level – 60% of clients are college educated and almost 25% achieved graduate-level education.
- Tenure of relationships⁹ – 87% are in relationships more than two years and 53% in relationships for more than 10 years.
- Marital status – 67% are married to their abuser.
- Family status – 63% have children; in 74% of these cases, the children are minors.

There are no studies that compare data from Jewish relationships to those of other cultures and religions. It is therefore impossible to say that Jewish women stay longer than any other.

⁸ SHALVA was founded in 1986 by Orthodox Jewish women to serve the Orthodox community. In its earlier years, SHALVA served only Orthodox women. Because this study analyzes results since SHALVA's inception, it appears that the majority of clients are Orthodox. In examining the past five years of data, however, only 25.3% of SHALVA's clients are Orthodox.

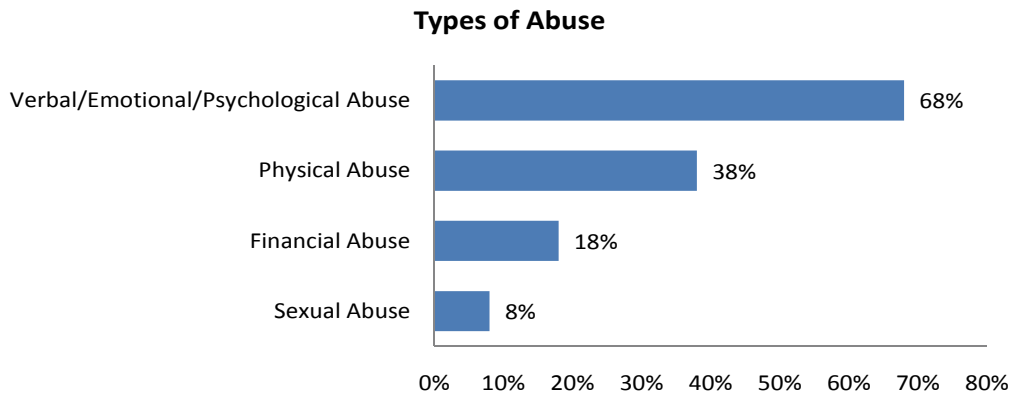
⁹ These statistics are not indicative of the duration of abuse. This study does not analyze how long clients remain in abusive relationships before they seek assistance or break free.

Types of abuse

Abuse is experienced in multiple ways and settings. Although many people assume physical violence is the only type of abuse, it is verbal, psychological and emotional abuse that is most prevalent among SHALVA's clients.

This type of abuse refers to one partner who diminishes and destroys the self-esteem of an intimate partner for the sole purpose of power and control. This abuse is often experienced through threats, manipulation, criticism, blame, shame and isolation.

In the analysis of SHALVA's case files, clients report experiencing multiple types of abuse at the same time. These include: verbal/psychological/emotional abuse, financial abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse.¹⁰ It is important to note that clients are not required to disclose personal information during crisis intervention or counseling sessions.



Almost one-quarter (21%) of SHALVA's clients experienced abuse at earlier points in their life by a member or members of their family of origin. Some were victims of domestic abuse in other relationships and some lived in households where domestic abuse occurred.

According to the American Psychological Association, studies¹¹ have identified this phenomenon known as "intergenerational violence," which recognizes that violence often repeats itself across generations. Women who experienced prior abuse may be susceptible to future abusive relationships. SHALVA clients who have experienced prior abuse face additional

¹⁰ Taken from Appendix C of the SHALVA research study. Abuse experiences of direct clients from 1994-2008. Please see attached.

¹¹ A child's exposure to the father abusing the mother is the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next, according to the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family, 1996.

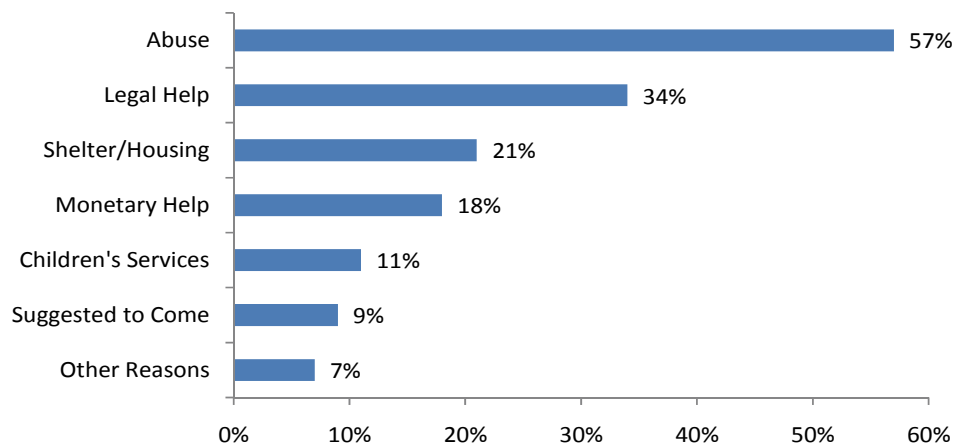
challenges since they may need to seek financial, emotional or housing-related support from the same family members who abused them earlier in life.

The intergenerational violence theory postulates that children who are raised in a violent household are more likely than children raised in a non-violent household to be involved in family violence (domestic violence and child abuse) as adults. This involvement can be as a perpetrator, victim, or both. In this sample, a number of women worried that they were repeating the cycle of their families or that their children were beginning to repeat the cycle.

Reasons for contacting SHALVA

Clients contact SHALVA with a broad array of needs, ranging from legal assistance to financial help. The most common reason is that they are experiencing abuse, but often express one or more reasons for reaching out.

Why Clients Contact SHALVA



Source of SHALVA referrals

Friends and family members provided the most referrals to SHALVA (34%). The next largest source of referrals came from social service and mental health agencies, which referred 28% of SHALVA clients. Clients were referred from the following types of agencies:

Social service and mental health agencies referred 28% of SHALVA clients:

- ***85% were referred from general/community agencies***
- ***15% were referred from Jewish agencies***

Rabbis representing all Jewish denominations also served as a major source of referrals (16.6%).

Barriers to Change

Victims of domestic violence commonly face formidable obstacles to building a safe and peaceful life for themselves and their families. Often marginalized without much societal support, SHALVA clients most frequently cited limited or no access to funds, legal problems, difficulty in securing housing and the challenges of caring for their children as the most common barriers to making a change in their lives. They also reported particular difficulties that result from their Jewish faith and cultural identity.

Financial Issues

Financial issues were identified as the main obstacle to making changes for 77% of SHALVA clients. This contradicts the common perception that Jewish women are financially secure or wealthy and do not require as much social service support, especially for basic needs. More than 75% of clients felt financial needs were the primary hurdle in trying to leave an abusive relationship, and needed help to do so.

The research revealed that husbands, regardless of their wives income, often had all or disproportionate control over marital finances. In some cases women had to beg for money, even for basic necessities. One husband gave his wife \$50 per week for her and their children for food and other necessities. Another husband told his wife that if she was a “good girl,” he would give her money each month.¹²

As a result, SHALVA clients frequently request financial assistance. This is driven by the fact that many clients do not have independent access or have limited access to funds, while others come from households with limited financial resources. In addition to receiving assistance from SHALVA, some women receive various forms of public assistance, including subsidized housing, Medicaid and food stamps, however many do not.

Upon leaving, as a result of divorce or separation, some clients struggle to provide themselves and their children with basic needs, including food, housing¹³, clothes and healthcare.

SHALVA is an Illinois Certified Domestic Violence agency and due to these constraints placed on abused women, requires that all services are free.

¹² SHALVA research study, page 63.

¹³ “Housing” as used in this summary refers to all issues related to housing for a client and her family when not in an emergency or crisis situation. “Shelter” as used in this summary refers to emergency or crisis housing.

Living in 'Functional Poverty'

On paper, clients appeared to be financially stable, but in reality, they did not have access to money or financial assets and therefore could not get free legal or financial assistance.

Many SHALVA clients were not eligible for public assistance due to their unique circumstances. These SHALVA clients live with “functional poverty,” where they appear to have assets or access to funds, but in fact do not.

Regardless of the client’s economic level, most face significant financial difficulties upon separation. Lack of money forces clients to make difficult decisions for themselves and their children. Women who seek to leave their relationship often struggle with the financial component of divorce and the cost of legal proceedings. SHALVA clients are often forced to move in with other abusive family members or live in another part of the house with their current abuser.

Legal Issues

Legal issues were identified as the second most common obstacle to leaving an abusive relationship for 62% of SHALVA clients, including difficulties with:

- child custody
- visitation
- child support
- distribution of assets
- Orders of Protection
- financial issues related to retaining attorneys
- finding responsive, reasonably priced attorneys
- navigating the court system

Clients need assistance in understanding legal processes and potential options, including divorce and the order of protection process, as well as help paying for legal assistance. Women seeking help often expect their SHALVA therapist to assist with legal issues. Many contact SHALVA for referral to an attorney who will take their case for low or no cost.¹⁴

The cost of legal assistance can influence the decisions that clients make in this area. SHALVA clients need affordable, high-quality assistance for legal matters, which are often complex and acrimonious due to the added layer of domestic abuse. Divorce cases can last between two and

¹⁴ In response, SHALVA created the Legal Liaison Project in 2008 to address the unique legal needs of SHALVA’s clients by answering their questions and helping them access appropriate legal assistance in the community. The Legal Liaison does not represent clients.

nine years, and it is not uncommon for both parties to use multiple legal providers. Relationships with attorneys are often terminated due to dissatisfaction, lack of payment, frustration with the case, and various procedural issues.

Some clients complain about rulings regarding their children, custody and visitation, leading some to feel “victimized by the court system.”¹⁵ Women feel many judges do not understand abuse or take it into account when making rulings.¹⁶

Clients who choose to engage in legal proceedings are the most fearful of losing custody of their children, risk losing material property as well as their safety.

Some clients gave up fighting over child custody because they could not afford the legal fees.¹⁷ The most contentious issues for clients involve custody and support, the complexity of which can impact the length of legal proceedings. Some clients initially had enough money to pay legal fees, but the lengthy legal battle to deal with these issues drained their finances.¹⁸

Children’s Welfare

Concern over their children is another primary motivator for SHALVA’s clients to leave their abuser, while at the same time this concern serves as a potential barrier. Clients fear putting their children’s safety and welfare at risk and may strive to keep the family unit intact, despite the abusive environment. The majority of SHALVA clients (63%) have children, and in 74% of those cases the children are minors. Clients face challenges as they struggle with parenting and child custody issues, as well as the effect of the abuse on their children.

Among SHALVA clients with children, in 63% of these cases, children were also being abused either directly or indirectly by witnessing the abuse of their mother.

In some cases, fathers inflicted physical abuse on their sons and verbal abuse on their daughters. In other cases, the occurrence of physical abuse had a severe impact on all the children. Along with verbal abuse, one father left bruises on his daughter and another grabbed his child’s face hard enough to cause a nosebleed.¹⁹

When the children were exposed to abuse, either directly or indirectly, they reacted with behavioral and psychological issues, including aggressive behavior at school and at home,

¹⁵ SHALVA research study, page 70.

¹⁶ SHALVA research study, page 70.

¹⁷ SHALVA research study, page 67-68.

¹⁸ SHALVA research study, page 75.

¹⁹ SHALVA research study, page 73.

anxiety disorders, bladder control problems, substance abuse, eating disorders, and self-mutilation. All the women feared that their children might repeat the pattern of violence in later life by either choosing an abusive partner or becoming an abuser. Some clients worried that their situation had unwittingly taught their daughters to be victims.²⁰

In many cases, the perpetrator used the children to exert power and control to further abuse their partner. In several situations, children were used primarily as pawns by fathers, putting them in the middle or presenting the client with an impossible situation. For example, one father told his son “that he would never see him again because of his crazy mother.”²¹

Impact of Jewish Identity

Being Jewish creates unique challenges for clients that women of other cultures may not face. The Jewish faith affects how clients experience abuse, the services sought and the support needed.

The community-held myth that domestic abuse does not occur in “respectable Jewish homes” leads women to deny the reality of their lives.

Many are fearful that they will not be believed. Others feel that as a Jewish woman, they are responsible for peace in the home (Shalom Bayit), thus perpetuating a sense of failure and self-blame when abuse occurs. Some clients believed that admitting to being abused could potentially embarrass their family and their community. Non-Jewish women who married Jewish abusive men were in disbelief as they too believed this myth.

For many of SHALVA’s clients, Jewish observances and their connection to the Jewish community are empowering and supportive, while others feel stress and tension tied to their Jewish rituals. This is particularly, though not exclusively, an issue for women from Orthodox households, but is not limited to them. Abusive religious men find refuge in the misinterpretation of religious and legal doctrines. These women often face more concentrated challenges related to religious observance, traditions and lifecycle events.

Religious and Cultural Issues

- **Jewish observance** – Holidays and observances are often a time of stress, anxiety and tension. For some clients, Jewish rituals and celebrations provide a sense of focus, strength and pride. Similarly, planning a lifecycle event such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah helps some women stay involved and instills in them a sense of belonging. Some women, however, experienced added stress in planning lifecycle events because of the

²⁰ SHALVA research study, page 84.

²¹ SHALVA research study, page 74.

difficulties of having to negotiate with their children's father, and often needing court intervention. Also, Jewish holidays often create additional problems with regard to visitation scheduling.

- **Community support** – Being Jewish and connected to the Jewish community, regardless of religious denomination, is a source of comfort for some abuse victims, but for others it is not. Some feel the Jewish community provides a supportive structure to their life following an abusive relationship. Other abused women struggle with their faith and feel disconnected from the Jewish community. A few clients felt “let down by the Jewish community” and others experienced humiliation when seeking resources and financial help.²² In a crisis of faith, other clients felt separated from G-d in prayer.²³
- **Fleeing the country**– The Israeli Law of Return adds another layer of complexity for women. This law allows any Jewish person (born or converted) to move to Israel and gain immediate citizenship. The ability of abusive partners to flee to Israel and legally reside there presented an additional threat for clients and their children.

Some women feared the perpetrator could take the children and rely on Israeli citizenship to leave the U.S. indefinitely.

Those perpetrators already having dual citizenship could flee the country thus avoiding paying child support, making financial settlements, or granting a *GET* (a Jewish religious divorce document).

- **Divorce issues** – For a number of clients, it was important to secure a *GET* either on its own or as a part of a civil divorce. This process presents complications because under Jewish law, men voluntarily present the *GET* to the woman and as a result, exert more control over the *GET* process.²⁴ It can be used as a form of extortion when the abuser demands money or custody in trade for the *GET*. Without the *GET* religious women are not considered divorced and are not free to remarry a Jewish man, thus becoming an Agunah, a chained woman.
- **Role of rabbis** – Many clients were referred to SHALVA by a rabbi, either their own or a rabbi from another congregation (16.6%). Some rabbis provided support and helpful resources, while others appeared to “take sides” with the abuser. Those clients often felt unsupported and blamed for the abuse.

²² SHALVA research study, page 92.

²³ SHALVA research study, page 92.

²⁴ While important for clients, the *GET* process appears to be dependent on each client's needs. Some clients tie the *GET* to a civil divorce, while others do not. Source: SHALVA research study, page 91: Services from Jewish agencies and programs.

SHALVA: A Critical Community Resource

SHALVA has developed its service model to best meet the needs of its clients. The staff, comprised of all Jewish denominations, understands the nuances of Jewish culture in concert with the issues experienced by domestic violence victims everywhere. This unique combination of expertise in domestic abuse, coupled with a sensitivity and awareness of Jewish religious and cultural practice, enables SHALVA to best serve women in the Jewish community.

The agency provides clients with a comprehensive suite of **free** services to help manage their abusive situation. Staff members not only provide assistance at a moment of crisis, but also develop an ongoing therapeutic relationship with clients to ensure they are able to address the myriad of challenges they are experiencing as well as gain an understanding of how this could happen to someone like them.

SHALVA is located in an undisclosed location providing safety and an extra layer of confidentiality.

SHALVA's scope of services is distinctly different, addressing needs that many domestic abuse or social service agencies do not encounter. The agency's practice model has evolved to address the religious and cultural context of being Jewish. For example, SHALVA no longer operates a shelter, while most general service domestic violence agencies do have a shelter. Based on an analysis of SHALVA's case files, it was determined that few clients require emergency shelter, but many need long-term housing solutions. Another differentiation is SHALVA's management of children who have experienced domestic abuse. While SHALVA recognizes the urgent needs of such children, the organization made a strategic decision to focus its limited resources on adult clients as other agencies were better suited to serve children.

Emphasis on individual needs

SHALVA focuses on the particular circumstances of each client. To increase its effectiveness, the agency provides therapy services related only to abuse issues. Since clients' cases are often complex and multi-faceted, SHALVA provides multiple services to meet their needs.

The agency is highly proactive in coordinating with other agencies and individuals to assist their clients.

With the client's consent, SHALVA will work with attorneys, counselors, and other professionals to advocate on the client's behalf and collaborate on action plans – in many cases for several years.

The successful results of SHALVA's efforts are reflected in the analysis of data, the stories and the referrals throughout the community. SHALVA makes a powerful and direct impact that changes lives. Among the case file sample in the SHALVA study, 37% of clients reached a satisfactory point of resolution.²⁵ While success is largely defined by the client, for the most part this meant that this group of clients felt knowledgeable and empowered, and could make good choices for themselves and their children.

SHALVA's Specialized Services To Clients Include:

- **Financial support** – The agency frequently provides clients with financial assistance in the form of interest-free loans or grants, highly unusual among other agencies.
- **Legal services** – SHALVA offers clients ongoing legal assistance through education, referrals and support services. Recently, the agency added specific services to deal with the legal processes of separation and divorce.

The Legal Liaison Program provides clients with a network of affordable attorneys, as well as an advisor to help navigate the legal process.

Clients continue to retain their own individual legal counsel, but SHALVA provides legal expertise and advocacy during the process that many clients need during negotiations. The Legal Liaison also works in conjunction with each client's therapist in order to create a holistic approach.

- **Individual and group counseling** – SHALVA therapists work closely with clients to help them gain self-understanding, as well as learn how to set limits in relationships, feel empowered and assertive, and improve self-esteem. Clients use individual sessions and support groups to achieve personal goals. Making progress toward these goals is necessary for clients to move forward.
- **Safety planning** – SHALVA helps clients plan what to do in case of an abusive incident and educates them on patterns of violence, as well as how to evaluate legal options. Clients are often less concerned about their own safety but family, friends and therapists may be more cognizant of potential dangers. SHALVA is located in an undisclosed location to provide the highest safety and security necessary for clients and staff.
- **Education and prevention** – SHALVA believes that education is power and helps clients understand the complexities of domestic abuse, and its effect on them and their children. The agency teaches clients new coping skills while they explore the choices and options available to them, whether they leave the relationship or choose to stay.

²⁵ Source: SHALVA research study, page 60: Termination and case resolution.

SHALVA staff members also regularly present programs to religious, professional and community groups on numerous domestic violence issues, including prevention.

- **Child-related referrals** – SHALVA does not treat children directly, since staff members believe they are best served by agencies with this particular focus. However, SHALVA assists clients with parenting issues related to domestic abuse, safety planning and visitation. SHALVA works hard to ensure children receive the necessary care by linking families with other service providers and case management. SHALVA collaborates with Jewish children’s agencies, school-based social workers, and family service agencies outside the Jewish community, private counselors and psychiatrists.
- **Housing and shelter referrals** – SHALVA has a close working relationship with numerous area domestic violence providers when there is a need for emergency shelter and will provide Kosher food if necessary. The agency also refers clients to other service providers to explore housing alternatives.
- **Rabbinical advocacy and education** – SHALVA provides support to clients if they need to appear before the Bet Din (rabbinical court) in client divorce proceedings, among other services.
- **24-hour help line** – Free assistance is provided around the clock on the phone line 773-583-HOPE (4673).

By design, SHALVA employs only the Executive Director and Director of Development full-time. All therapists hold master’s degrees and work part-time. This is an acknowledgment that working with victims of domestic abuse can be extremely emotionally draining. Employees benefit from having limits, thus reducing burnout and costly turnover, and this in turn benefits clients.

Many SHALVA clients share thoughts and gratitude through letters and anonymous comments. The case files indicate that many women feel coming to a Jewish agency with Jewish workers who are familiar with the culture and customs adds to their comfort level and strength. Several women mention that they had been to other social service agencies or had private therapists and did not feel they were heard or understood.

Conclusion

Facing domestic abuse is often a long and frightening process that leads to varied outcomes. Each client is unique and success as defined by one may be quite different than another. SHALVA works with clients so they can define and work toward a successful outcome. In many situations, clients are able to reach a point of resolution. However, in some cases, clients choose an alternative path. Clients and their children require a multiplicity of specific clinical and adjunct services. As a highly specialized culturally based agency, SHALVA is knowledgeable in the intricacies and dynamics of domestic abuse, especially regarding the enormous financial, legal, emotional and safety challenges Jewish victims face.

The findings of the research are consistent with SHALVA's understanding of Jewish domestic abuse and the needs of women in the community. This study reinforces SHALVA's 25 years of experience, reconfirming the need for its existence. The results of the research are meant to aid SHALVA in advocating for client needs, increased clinical services and enhanced prevention and education programming.

From its inception in 1986, SHALVA has made tremendous strides and has created inroads within the Jewish community never believed possible. Starting with 12 Orthodox women sitting around a kitchen table whispering about domestic abuse, SHALVA has grown to a staff and Board of Directors of Jewish women and men who will not be silenced. From serving 24 clients in its first year to serving over 4,000 clients almost 25 years later, SHALVA has learned that fear, silence and denial can and does perpetuate domestic abuse.

***After 25 years of service, SHALVA presents data that "speaks the unspeakable."
It is the expectation that this research study will create awareness and
legitimize the discussion that the Jewish community has a problem that erodes
the very foundation of Judaism.***

Judaism speaks clearly against partner abuse in all religious affiliations and supports community involvement to help victims and abusers. Jewish tradition lays the foundation for our communal response to domestic abuse, as summarized in the rabbinic teaching, "Every Jew is responsible for another" (Ethics of the Fathers).

Appendix A: Research Methodology

The research project was designed to help SHALVA quantify the services the agency provides, create a profile of SHALVA clients and the abuse they experience, assess client needs including barriers they encounter, and analyze how being Jewish conditions their experiences with domestic abuse. The research utilized client administrative data and case files, which were kept strictly confidential. The case files were strictly redacted: all names and identifying information were removed from the case files by SHALVA staff. Information analyzed included client demographics, characteristics of abuse and case services.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in this study. For the quantitative analysis, client data was collected from 1994 to 2008, when client records were the most complete. The data was collected from client intake forms and client time logs, both of which are completed by SHALVA staff. The quantitative results provided such information as client demographics, types of abuse and service needs.

Qualitative research was performed on a sample of cases from 1987 through 2008 to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences and violence impacting SHALVA clients. A random sampling of cases was analyzed as representative of SHALVA clients. Seventy-five cases were examined in detail, providing in-depth qualitative analysis to complement the quantitative data.

For more information, visit www.shalvaonline.org.

Appendix B: Demographic Characteristics of Direct Clients

<i>(All Numbers are Percentages)</i>						
		1994-1998	1999-2001 ²⁶	2002-2003	2004-2008	Average
Client has children	No	51.3	17.4	35.9	42.7	36.8
	Yes	48.7	82.6	64.1	57.3	63.2
Religious Affiliation	Orthodox	33.6	25.4	24.5	25.3	27.1
	Conservative	10.2	16.9	17	14.5	14.6
	Reform	15.6	18.4	13	21.2	17.1
	Reconstructionist	0	1.2	0.5	0.2	0.5
	Distant/Nonaffiliated	23.4	21.8	26.5	18.6	22.6
	Not Jewish	17.2	16.3	18.5	20.3	18.1
Living Arrangement²⁷	Husband/partner	69.7	69	69.8	55.2	65.9
	Friend	2.3	1.9	0.5	2.2	1.7
	Shelter	3.1	4	3.2	2.9	3.3
	Self	8.5	8.1	4.8	13.8	8.8
	Self with Kids	9.3	9.2	11.1	14.3	11
	Extended Family	6.2	7.8	3.2	8.5	6.4
	Wife	0.8	0	7.4	0.7	2.2
Education Level	High School	13.6	25.2	9.1	16.6	16.1
	College	59.1	58.6	68.2	52.3	59.6
	Graduate School	27.3	16.2	22.7	31.1	24.3

²⁶ Due to time constraints, SHALVA analyzed 1999-2001 data internally based upon University of Chicago analysis methodology.

²⁷ In 2004-2008, 1.5% had “other” listed for living arrangement

Appendix C: Abuse Experiences of Direct Clients

		<i>(All Numbers are Percentages)</i>				
		1994-1998	1999-2001²⁸	2002-2003	2004-2008	Average
Length of Relationship	Less than 6 Months	2.4	2.5	3.2	3.8	3.0
	6 months to 2 Years	6.3	11.3	8.4	8.5	8.6
	2 to 5 Years	16.5	17.1	14.2	15.1	15.7
	5 to 10 Years	16.5	18.4	22.6	19.8	19.3
	10 to 20 Years	29.9	30.1	32.6	31.9	31.1
	Over 20 Years	28.3	20.6	18.9	20.9	22.3
Any Past Abuse?	No	84.4	N/A	77.5	76.2	79.4
	Yes	15.6	N/A	22.5	23.8	20.6
Current Verbal/ Psychological/ Emotional Abuse	No	57.8	15.7	30.5	26.0	32.5
	Yes	42.2	84.3	69.5	74.0	67.5
Current Physical Abuse	No	74.0	53.7	60.1	61.6	62.4
	Yes	26.0	46.3	39.9	38.4	37.6
Current Financial Abuse	No	96.4	75.9	78.5	75.7	81.6
	Yes	3.6	24.1	21.5	24.3	18.4
Current Sexual Abuse	No	95.1	93.5	88.8	89.8	91.8
	Yes	4.9	6.5	11.2	10.2	8.2

²⁸ Due to time constraints, SHALVA analyzed 1999-2001 data internally based upon University of Chicago analysis methodology.

Appendix D: How Clients Heard About SHALVA

	<i>(All Numbers are Percentages)</i>				
	1994-1998	1999-2001 ²⁹	2002-2003	2004-2008	Average
Friend/Family	34.2	32.1	32.3	37.9	34.1
Other Agency	33.3	24.9	28.6	26.5	28.3
Rabbi	25.8	13.9	13.0	13.8	16.6
News Article	4.2	2.9	6.8	3.9	4.5
Other Source	3.3	1.8	4.7	4.3	3.5
House Poster	2.5	5.4	9.9	8.6	6.6
Police/ Hospital	0.8	4.3	3.1	2.5	2.7
Speaker	0.8	1.2	4.2	2.0	2.1
Newsletter	0.8	1.8	0.5	1.8	1.2
Always Known	0.8	3.5	1.0	2.7	2.0
Another Client	0.8	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.6
Internet	0.0	2.9	0.0	2.0	1.2
Former Client	N/A	5.3	N/A	N/A	N/A

²⁹ Due to time constraints, SHALVA analyzed 1999-2001 data internally based upon University of Chicago analysis methodology.

Appendix E: Reasons for Contacting SHALVA

	<i>(All Numbers are Percentages)</i>				
	1994-1998	1999-2001 ³⁰	2002-2003	2004-2008	Average
Abuse	59.2	60.1	48.2	61.4	57.2
Legal Help	40.4	30.0	38.1	28.8	34.3
Shelter/Housing	26.4	19.0	17.9	20.0	20.8
Monetary Help	21.3	13.3	21.6	16.0	18.1
Other Reason	11.8	3.4 ³¹	7.8	4.3	6.8
Children's Services	11.0	8.8	17.4	7.7	11.2
Suggested to Come	6.6	5.1	10.6	13.2	8.9
Counseling	6.6	3.4	6.0	4.9	5.2
Rabbinic Issues	3.3	1.3	3.2	1.3	2.3
Not Sure	2.9	1.3	3.7	8.6	4.1
Job Opportunities	1.8	0.6	5.0	2.2	2.4

³⁰ Due to time constraints, SHALVA analyzed 1999-2001 data internally based upon University of Chicago analysis methodology.

³¹ Group Requests



www.shalvaonline.org