

# IDVSA News

Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault  
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### The mission of the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (IDVSA) is to

advance the knowledge base related to domestic violence and sexual assault in an effort to end violence. IDVSA accomplishes this through supporting research on domestic violence and sexual assault and by providing training, technical assistance, and information dissemination to the practitioner community and the community at large.

### The Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

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## On Trial: The Need for Expert Witnesses in Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Cases

In Austin, and around the country, there is a growing need for and use of expert witnesses in non-high profile domestic violence and sexual assault cases. I can only hypothesize why this is so, but it is probable that this phenomenon is part of a natural progression in these movements as we continue to shape social norms about interpersonal violence. It is also very likely that all the efforts toward training personnel in the legal and judicial systems have really paid off! Although we continue to encounter astonishing and uninformed responses to domestic violence and sexual assault, and much of our efforts are still spent on maintaining and securing funding for direct service programs, I think that domestic violence as a social problem is relatively well-recognized by our citizens and private and governmental funders. Unfortunately, even after the persuasive efforts of many advocates, we have to persist to achieve this recognition with sexual assault.

The expert witness' role is to enlighten and educate judges and juries about

the dynamics, impact, and consequences of interpersonal violence on victims and survivors and to explain the controlling and abusive behaviors of perpetrators. A successful case always starts with good legal counsel, and, fortunately, in the Austin area we have several organizations that provide free or low-cost services to victims of interpersonal violence. In my experience, the use of an expert witness is often essential to **achieving justice** for victims. As advocates for survivors of interpersonal violence we understand and can articulate this information more effectively than anyone else. Serving as an expert witness is a learned skill for *any* advocate or researcher and is great advocacy work.

In response to this growing need, the National Center for Domestic and Sexual Violence, the UT Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and the Domestic Violence Clinic at the UT Law School are co-hosting an expert witness training on *continued on page 2*

## Regina Jones Johnson Name Co-Investigator

A significant Institute accomplishment in 2004 was the addition of a new Co-Investigator, Dr. Regina Jones Johnson, Ph.D., M.S.N., R.N., Assistant Professor in the UT Austin School of Nursing. Dr. Johnson has been a registered nurse for over twenty-two years and has extensive experience in the health care arena. Her current research interests

include childhood sexual victimization, domestic violence, and sexual assault among at-risk populations. Dr. Johnson's official role as Co-Investigator for the Institute expands the multidisciplinary efforts of the Institute and formalizes the participation of the School of Nursing. Welcome Dr. Johnson!



**Noël Bridget Busch, PhD**  
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## IDVSA Welcomes New Staff

In October 2004, the Institute welcomed a new Associate Director, *Heather Neuroth Gatlin*. Heather brings a multitude of research, evaluation, budget and program management experience to the Institute, as well as direct service experience working with battered immigrant women. Heather has an extensive background in immigration and welfare issues and previously served as the Project Manager of the Welfare Innovations Evaluation for three years at the UT-Austin Center for Social Work Research, a project that included evaluations of direct service provision to victims of domestic violence throughout Texas.

*Dorothy Garza* joined the Institute in December 2004 as the new Curricula Developer. Dorothy, who received both her BA in Psychology and her MSSW at UT Austin, comes to the Institute from SafePlace where she worked as the family violence prevention coordinator. She has also previously worked for Family Forward

and was the Director of the Hispanic Mother Daughter program. As Curricula Developer, she will focus on the development and implementation of programs and activities to prepare students from a variety of disciplines at the University of Texas to meet the critical needs of victims and survivors of violence. Dorothy will also look at continuing education opportunities and curricula design for practitioners working in community agencies.

*Morgan Curtis* also joined the Institute in December 2004 as the Graduate Research Assistant. Morgan is a first year MSSW student who has been involved in sexual assault and domestic violence advocacy, prevention, and education and worked with trafficking victims in Thailand. Morgan will be helping out with various tasks and projects within the Institute, including coordination of the newsletter.

## Updated Website

Please visit the Institute's updated website at <http://www.utexas.edu/research/cswr/idvsa/> for current information on Institute events and to access our new resource guide to Central Texas Providers of domestic violence and sexual assault services.

## On Trial *(continued from page 1)*

October 6 - 7, 2005 at the UT Law School in Austin, Texas. Trainers include attorneys, social workers, and expert witnesses, and sessions involve experiential learning exercises and rehearsals in a court setting. For more information on the Expert Witness Training or to register, please see [http://www.ncdsv.org/expertwitness\\_dv.html](http://www.ncdsv.org/expertwitness_dv.html). This training is being held in conjunction with the Fifth Biennial National Trapped by Poverty/Trapped by Abuse Conference scheduled for October 7 - 9, 2005 at the Omni Hotel, Austin,

TX. For more information on the Trapped by Poverty/Trapped by Abuse conference, please refer to the website <http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/ceu/trapped/>. The goal of these events is to continue to create avenues that achieve justice for victims of interpersonal violence. Please join us.

*Noël Bridget Busch, PhD*  
Principal Investigator  
*The Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault*

## Curriculum Update

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you more about the exciting new curriculum development efforts of the IDVSA. Thanks to funding support from the RGK Foundation, the IDVSA is now expanding on its mission by planning and implementing a variety of activities and programs aimed at increasing university students' awareness about issues related to domestic violence and sexual assault. We are also striving to equip students with knowledge of resources for victims and survivors.

One of my goals as the IDVSA Curriculum Developer is to infuse information about interpersonal and sexual violence into the core curriculum of disciplines across campus. Recently, the University initiated an effort to revise the undergraduate core curriculum, creating an ideal opportunity for me to provide input to the new core curriculum subcommittee. In February 2005, I sent a letter to the subcommittee, addressing the importance of real world examples within the classroom as an integral component of undergraduate education. The letter specifically encouraged the integration of information about domestic violence and sexual assault across disciplines. I recently received confirmation that the letter would be shared with each member of the undergraduate core curriculum subcommittee.

As many of you know, the IDVSA is especially committed to preparing students who will be working in the helping professions to have the skills that will enable them to provide effective,

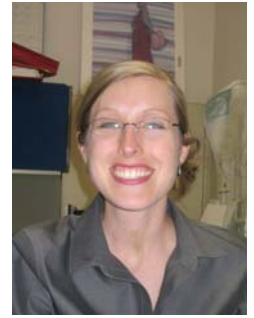
empathetic and knowledgeable responses to victims of interpersonal violence. In keeping with this focus, I developed a presentation on domestic violence and presented to a Master's level social work field practicum class in February and a BSW class in April. Through the use of interactive classroom activities and discussion, these presentations surveyed students' current beliefs and perceptions on domestic violence and discussed basic dynamics of domestic violence such as issues of power and control, the impact of violence on children, and tips for potential interactions with clients. The students completed evaluations at the conclusion of the presentation, providing much positive feedback and suggestions for future training. I plan to offer this opportunity to Field Practicum classes each semester and will incorporate suggestions from the student evaluations, such as providing an opportunity for students to practice their responses to survivors and receive feedback. I will also develop a comparable presentation addressing sexual assault issues.

Additional curriculum development activities include meetings of a workgroup of faculty, staff and students that brainstorms ways to incorporate domestic violence and sexual assault information across disciplines. If you have suggestions for curriculum development and/or are interested in participating in the work group, please contact me by email at [dzgarza@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:dzgarza@mail.utexas.edu) or by phone at 512-232-3507.

## Seed Grant Award Announcement

The Institute would like to extend congratulations to Dr. Carol Lewis, Associate Director of the UT Austin Center for Social Work Research (CSWR), who has been awarded a 2005 research seed grant from the Institute, made possible through a grant from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. Dr. Lewis' study, *Interpersonal Violence and Adolescent Mothers: The Role of Personal Relationships in Student*

*Success*, will examine how teenage mothers' interpersonal relationships influence their families, educational achievements and ability to participate in a teen parenting program. Co-investigators for the study are Dr. Ruth McRoy, CSWR Director and Associate Dean for Research at the UT School of Social Work, and Carolyn Patterson-Williams of the Austin Learning Academy.



**Heather Neuroth Gatlin**  
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**Morgan J Curtis**  
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## Affiliate Showcase: Sarah Kihneman, Legal Services Director at SafePlace

*This issue has many new features, one of which is the Affiliate Showcase. Our first showcase focuses on Sarah Kihneman, the Legal Services director at SafePlace. The following is a transcript of an e-interview between Sarah and Morgan Curtis, the IDVSA Graduate Research Assistant*

**MC:** What is your role at SafePlace?

**SK:** I am the Legal Services Director. I am also the only attorney on staff at SafePlace. I also supervise SafePlace's legal advocates who provide on-site crisis counseling, court accompaniment and referrals to battered women who are victims of crimes or are applying for protective orders.

**MC:** How would you describe the current climate at SafePlace and what restructuring has occurred as a result of the recent funding cuts?

**SK:** SafePlace is currently working to implement the programmatic changes that are an effect of the layoffs that occurred in January 2005. We are consolidating our counseling program and integrating clients previously served at our women's shelter into our family shelter. Most programs are continuing in the form that our community partners are accustomed to, but with fewer staff.

**MC:** Are there any new programs or services that are being implemented?

**SK:** We recently received funding to restart our BabySafe program which provides individual and group counseling and advocacy for victims of domestic violence who are pregnant or are new moms. We also received a contract with AISD to expand our Expect Respect program which provides individual and group counseling at school for middle- and high-school aged



*On April 16 staff and affiliates of the IDVSA joined community members for the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual SafePlace Walk for Safe Families and Safe Streets. Team IDVSA raised over \$700 and had a total of nine members that walked.*

kids who are identified by school counselors as living in homes with domestic violence or being in abusive dating relationships.

**MC:** Does SafePlace have any research needs that you can identify?

**SK:** We are constantly looking for better ways to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs and of our community collaborations so we know how to best use our limited resources.

**MC:** What are the main barriers to service delivery at SafePlace?

**SK:** Limited resources. We think we know what services clients need to make their lives safer for themselves and their children. We just don't have the staff and the space to serve everyone who asks us for help. We would also like to do more for the clients who haven't asked us for help. We need to challenge the barriers, whether those are disabilities, cultural barriers, or just shame, that have prevented them in asking for help.

**MC:** Anything else you'd like me to include in the showcase?

**SK:** I would like to thank everyone who donated, volunteered, and participated in our 18th Annual Walk this past weekend. It was very successful in raising awareness and money.



## Affiliate Accomplishments

2004 was a very productive year for affiliates of the IDVSA. Throughout the year, faculty, staff, student, and community affiliates published over 40 articles in scholarly and professional journals, facilitated 50 presentations at conferences and

trainings, received 8 different honors and awards for their work, conducted over 10 research projects, and developed approximately 3 new direct services for victims and survivors of interpersonal violence. Congratulations to all of our affiliates

and thank you for your excellent work! If you are interested in learning more about affiliate accomplishments, please visit the IDVSA website at <http://www.utexas.edu/research/cswr/idvsa/>.

## Other Institute Updates

### ***Confronting Violence Against Women: The Work of Legal Activists***

On February 23, Dr. Noel Busch and Sarah Buel were among the panelists who spoke on the role of legal activists in cases involving violence against women. Dr. Busch addressed issues faced by expert witnesses and Professor Buel spoke about civil torts in domestic violence situations. Other members of the panel included Kathy Rodgers, the president of Legal Momentum, and Edna Yang, an attorney from PAPA. The panel discussion was well attended by members of the practice community and students from the law school.

### ***Flowers Aren't Enough***

The *Flowers Aren't Enough* performances, held at the Dell Jewish Community Center on April 6, and at the UT Austin School of Social Work Utopia Theatre on April 7, were a huge success. Nearly 300 people attended the two shows to see American-born Israeli actress, Naomi Ackerman, perform her riveting tale of Michal, a young woman from an upper-middle class Israeli family who finds herself in an abusive relationship. The event, coordinated by the Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force and the Austin Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Violence and co-sponsored by the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, raised over \$1,300, of which all proceeds go to the Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force for a public awareness campaign to be held during Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2005. The Institute extends a warm thank you to Diane Radin, coordinator of the event, and to all those in the community who made *Flowers Aren't Enough* such a success.



*Dr. Busch with Kathy Rodgers and her colleague from Legal Momentum at the February 23<sup>rd</sup> legal activists' panel discussion. Sarah Buel and Heather Neuroth Gatlin are in the background.*

### ***Brown Bag Presentations***

The Institute began its 2005 Brown Bag Research Discussion Series, with two brown bag presentations in April, 2005. The first was held at SafePlace on Friday, April 15, 2005, and featured a presentation by Dr. Dawn Fowler on her 2003 Institute-sponsored research, *Defining and Assessing Spirituality for Women Survivors Coping with Partner Abuse*. The Institute co-sponsored a second brown bag with the Center for Social Work Research at the UT Austin School of Social Work on Wednesday, April 20, 2005. This brown bag featured a presentation by 2003 seed grant recipient, Dr. Shanti Kulkarni, on her research, *Interpersonal Violence at the Crossroads between Adolescence and Adulthood*. Attendees at both events included faculty, staff, and students from the UT Austin School of Social Work, and representatives from TCFV, the Texas Department of State Health Services, the Salvation Army, and SafePlace. Please look for additional brown bag presentations during the fall 2005 semester.

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Conference Sponsored by:

- The DePaul College of Law, Schiller DuCanto & Fleck Family Law Center
- The University of Michigan School of Social Work
- The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work
- The University of Texas at Austin Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

**THE FIFTH BIENNIAL**

TRAPPED BY POVERTY / TRAPPED BY ABUSE  
NATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Friday, October 7 to Sunday, October 9, 2005

Omni Austin Hotel Downtown  
Austin, Texas

<http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/ceu/trapped/>

***Trial Run: Expert Witness in Domestic Violence Cases: A Training Sponsored by the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence***

Thursday, October 6 – Friday October 7  
Jeffers Courtroom, Third Floor, UT School of Law  
Registration: \$75  
[www.ncdsv.org/index.html](http://www.ncdsv.org/index.html)

The activities of the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault are made possible through funding by:

- The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
- The RGK Foundation
- The Shield-Ayers Foundation
- Dean Barbara White, UT Austin School of Social Work

## **Upcoming Events**

### **JUNE 2005**

***IDSVA Monthly Meeting***

Tuesday, June 7, 12:30-2:00PM  
Dean's Conference Room, UT School of Social Work

***From Bullying to Battering: Building Partnerships for Safe Schools***

Monday, June 6<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, June 7<sup>th</sup>  
SafePlace, Austin, TX  
[www.austin-safeplace.org](http://www.austin-safeplace.org)