

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence

The Nation's First State Domestic Violence Coalition • Founded 1976

September 9, 2008

Edward J. Zogby, Director
Bureau of Policy
Department of Public Welfare
Room 431, Health and Welfare Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

#2713
2008 SEP 15 AM 9:27
RECEIVED
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Re: Regulation No 14-513
Codification of the Family Violence Option

Dear Mr. Zogby:

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence submit the following comments in support of Regulation No. 14-513 which codifies the federal Family Violence Option requirements in Pennsylvania. The PCADV is extremely pleased with virtually all aspects of the proposed regulations; however, we do have a few suggestions we believe could better assist and protect victims of domestic violence.

Section 108-3: Universal Notification We recommend modifying Section 108-3(3)(iii) to clarify that "work or work-related activities" in which individuals with a good cause waiver of program requirements may voluntarily participate include education and training programs.

Most victims of domestic violence want to re-claim their lives and move toward financial stability as quickly as possible but often must focus on more immediate needs. Good cause waivers from the work requirement permits extra time before the client must meet the mandatory work hours. DPW's "exempt volunteer" policy provides the individual with the flexibility to volunteer to work or attend school or training for whatever opportunities are compatible in her particular situation. It is important that CAO staff, as part of universal notification, inform clients that being a "volunteer" includes both work and education and opportunities so each victim can make the best choices for herself and her children.

Section 108.16: DRS Responsibility for the FVI This section describes the responsibility of the Domestic Relations Division (DRS) to place a Family Violence Indicator (FVI) on child support cases when domestic violence is disclosed. The correct use of the FVI by the DRS is imperative to the safety of victims of domestic violence. The PCADV recommends Section 108.16(a) be amended to include the following: "The FVI may be requested by an individual who is in contact with the DRS. For individuals in counties in which a personal appearance at the

DRS is waived, the Department will electronically inform the DRS that a FVI has been placed in CIS.”

Many of the policies codified in these regulations have actually been in operation for a number of years and have provided immeasurable help to those fleeing abusive situations. The PCADV wholeheartedly supports adoption of this regulation with a few small modifications for clarification.

Please know the PCADV has also reviewed and fully supports the comments and recommendations submitted jointly by the Women’s Law Project, the Community Justice Project and Community Legal Services.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Kelly-Dreiss".

Susan Kelly-Dreiss
Executive Director

cc: Independent Regulatory Review Commission
Edwin B. Erickson, Chair, Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Vincent J. Hughes, Minority Chair, Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Frank Louis Oliver, Majority Chair, House Health and Human Services Committee
George T. Kenney, Jr. Minority Chair, House Health and Human Services Committee