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○ ISSUE 17 | ○ VOLUME 2 | ○ JUNE/JULY 2009

# Diversity & Human Rights

## focus

## Utahns Voice Opinions on LGBT Rights Issues

by Mike Thompson

Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to content in this article:

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against and discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

When Ogden-based Information Alliance conducted its statewide poll earlier this year (600 respondents with a 4 percent margin of error), we learned that 70 percent of Utahns know someone who is gay or transgender. With this information, it's not surprising that over 83 percent of Utahns support basic rights and protections for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members of our communities. Utahns care about the well-being of those in our communities.

Oftentimes it's assumed that conservative cultures demand anti-gay policies. However, these poll numbers indicate otherwise.

- When asked, “Do you support or oppose changing Utah’s current employment law to make it illegal to fire someone for their job solely because they are gay or transgender?”

Nearly 62 percent of respondents support such a measure.

- When asked, “Do you support or oppose changing Utah’s current housing law to make it illegal to deny someone housing solely because they are gay or transgender?”

Nearly 57 percent of respondents support a change in Utah law.

Two additional independent polls have similar results and these results strongly indicate there is Common Ground in Utah.

Mayor Ralph Becker and the Salt Lake City Council have demonstrated a commitment to bridging the cultural divides, real or perceived, that exist in our community. The recently held Dialogue on Discrimination series is an example of that commitment. As members of the community-at-large participate in these types of discussions, greater understanding is the result – similar to the 70 percent of Utahns who know someone gay or transgender. This understanding leads to strengthened public policy and ensures that greater and broader consideration is given when policy decisions are made.



This is where grassroots efforts play a significant role in bringing change. Rather than assume that Utah’s conservative culture may resist progressive ideas, we must each take the responsibility to participate and educate our neighbors, co-workers and relatives about the impact public policy has on the lives of those within our communities.

When looking at members of our community, we must do more than look beyond race, class, religion, color and sexual orientation. We must look at our differences, do our best to understand, and then work to find Common Ground.

Our focus then becomes on what unites us – this is when real change happens.

- Mike Thompson is the former executive director of Equality Utah.



# Linkages between Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, Women, and their Children

by Debra Hobbins, MSN, LSAC, APRN, NP

Article 5 and 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights apply to content in this article:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

*Domestic violence is a pattern of violent, controlling coercive behaviors intended to punish, abuse, and ultimately control the thoughts, beliefs and actions of the victim. This abuse usually increases over time. Domestic violence occurs in all segments of our society regardless of race, class, sexual preference and educational level. Domestic violence is a crime.*

— Barbara Hart, JD

## Examples of Domestic Violence Behaviors

Domestic violence (DV) is perpetrated by someone who is, was, or wishes to be involved in an intimate or dating relationship with an adult or adolescent. Some examples of DV behaviors are listed in the table below:

Physical	Emotional/Psychological	Sexual
Pushing, slapping, hitting, shoving, punching, kicking	Restricting access to financial resources: checkbook, money, debit card, car keys	Forcing sexual behaviors when partner is vulnerable: sleeping, drunk, not fully conscious, afraid to say no
Biting	Threats of harm or suicide	Physically hurting partner during sex
Restricting sleep	Physical or social isolation	Assaulting partner's genitals
Leaving partner in a dangerous place	Ignoring, dismissing, or ridiculing needs	Calling partner sexually degrading names: slut, ho, etc.
Refusing to obtain medical help when partner is injured	Name-calling, belittling, constant criticism, insults	Making partner perform sexual acts against his/her will
Strangulation, frequently called "choking"	Extreme jealousy or possessiveness	Denying access to contraception or birth control
Restricting access to food	Stalking	Treating partner as sex object
Restricting access to water	False accusations and blame	Criticizing partner's sexual performance or abilities
Tying or holding partner down	Degradation, humiliation, intimidation	Forcing partner to engage in sex acts with others
Assaulting partner with a weapon	Lying, breaking promises, and destroying trust	Forcing partner to watch sex acts performed by others
Forcing partner to ingest drugs and alcohol	Driving fast and recklessly to frighten and intimidate	Rape



### Utah Domestic Violence Statistics

- 40,000 Utah women are physically assaulted by an intimate partner and an additional 194,000 women are emotionally abused each year.
- 2.6 percent all Utahans have been victims of DV. Of these, 74.5 percent did not report the incident to authorities.
- 25 percent of Utah families suffer from some level of DV.
- 11 Utah women die each year from intimate partner violence.
- 50 percent of all women murdered in Utah were killed by a current or former intimate partner.
- In 2005, 75 percent of Utah DV homicide victims were killed by an intimate partner or a family member.
- In 2005, there were 65 DV-related deaths of adults ages 18 and older in Utah; of those 65 deaths, 44 were suicides and 21 were homicides.
- Utah ranked 16th nationally for the percentage of women killed by men in 2001, with a total of 18 women murdered by men.
- 20 percent of Utah children will hear or see verbal abuse in their homes.
- 7 percent of Utah children will hear or see physical abuse in their homes.

### Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse

There is a well-known connection between substance abuse and DV. However, alcohol and drug use affect individuals and relationships in many complex ways:

1. Individuals with substance abuse issues were frequently physically, emotionally, or sexually abused as children, becoming abusers in adulthood.
2. Use of alcohol and medications or drugs, both illegal and legally prescribed, may be used to help the injured person to cope with physical and emotional pain.
3. Alcohol and other drugs decrease inhibition, impulse control and the ability to think clearly and exercise good judgment. Because of this, people under the influence are more likely to abuse their partners and children.

### Children and Domestic Violence

A child's brain is 90 percent developed by age 3, even though the body is only 18 percent of adult size. The child's environment programs the brain to function in the type of

environment in which the child was raised. Children simply reflect the world in which they were raised.

Daughters of abused mothers frequently become targets of batterers because violence was "normalized" in their childhood homes. Children of abused mothers are six times more likely to commit suicide, and 50 percent more likely to use drugs/alcohol or become homeless.

In 1992, 60 percent of male juveniles serving long-term sentences in correctional facilities were incarcerated for killing their mothers' abusive partners. In children who were exposed to severe traumatic events, such as physical abuse or DV, more than 30 percent will develop serious and chronic neuropsychiatric problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); headaches; inability to focus at school; depression and guilt; and developmental delays. In children exposed to threats, brain development in the areas of memory and thinking ability can also develop abnormally.

Traumatic stress can cause changes in the brain that ultimately decreases a child's ability to conduct abstract and concrete thinking; problem-solve; form attachments and relationships with others; exhibit empathy and show care and concern for others; be attentive and remain on task; control impulses; develop fine motor skills; and sleep.

Because of these changes, children may exhibit poor anger management and problem-solving skills; intense separation anxiety;

"parentification"—" they are the parent/caretaker; hyperactivity; generalized anxiety; impulsivity; inability to follow structure; lack of boundaries; sleep problems, rapid heart rate, and high blood pressure.

Murder as a result of DV is a leading cause of traumatic death for women who are new or expectant mothers. Approximately 40-60 percent of men who abuse women also abuse their children.

Witnessing family violence is stressful to children and is a risk factor for long-term physical and mental health problems. Of those children killed due to DV, 90 percent are under 10 years, 56 percent are under 2 years.

### Conclusion

It is important to remember that alcohol and drug use do not cause violence. Many people who use substances are not violent; and many people who were abused as children do not use substances.



However, the information presented suggests a strong link between DV and substance abuse.

A very strong association between DV and permanent negative outcomes for children who are victims of or exposed to DV is also suggested. These children suffer in silence and need assistance from their families and communities.

- *Debra Hobbins is a women's health nurse practitioner with a sub-specialty in substance abuse, and will graduate with a Doctor of Nursing Practice this summer from the University of Utah.*

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