

# SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

## **SENATE, No. 419**

with Senate committee amendments

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: JANUARY 29, 1996

Senate Bill No. 419 (1R) establishes a 21-month Domestic Violence Resource Center Demonstration Program.

The Division of Youth and Family Services in the Department of Human Services will establish three domestic violence resource centers in three counties to provide evaluation and treatment services for persons who have been restrained pursuant to the "Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 1991" (P.L.1991, c.261; C.2C:25-17 et seq.) or found to have committed acts of domestic violence, and ordered by a court to receive domestic violence counseling and services. Each person ordered by a court to a center would pay a \$200 evaluation fee to the center to be used to support its programs and counseling services. All or part of the fee may be waived based on a person's ability to pay; the entire fee may be waived for indigent persons.

Referral to a domestic violence resource center would not be mandatory, but would be an option a court may exercise during the disposition of a domestic violence case.

Services offered by the centers would focus on intervention to end an offender's violent behavior. Upon court order, an offender would receive an initial assessment and evaluation by the center with a recommendation to the court for an intervention plan. In addition to assessing the person's history of domestic violence, the center would conduct screening for alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness and other related problems, and where indicated, would refer the person to other agencies specializing in such problems. Treatment and services provided by the center would include educational sessions concerning domestic violence, including criminal, legal, social and personal consequences of violent behavior. Programs attendance at a center or referral agency would be enforceable by court order, and a willful failure to attend the programs could result in a finding of contempt.

The bill requires the centers to work in conjunction with the domestic violence service agency of the county in which it is located to provide outreach services to domestic violence victims. Outreach

services would include information for victims concerning their legal rights and remedies, community resources and other available services.

The bill establishes an 12-member Domestic Violence Resource Center Advisory Committee. It also directs the division to contract with an independent, professional agent to evaluate the demonstration program and the division will report the results of the study to the Governor, the Legislature, the Attorney General, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The bill appropriates \$750,000 from the General fund to the Department of Human Services for the purpose of establishing the program outlined in the bill.

#### COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amended the bill, at the request of the chairman, to add a county prosecutor to the membership of the Domestic Violence Resource Center Advisory Committee. The amendment was supported by the sponsor.

#### FISCAL IMPACT

The bill appropriates \$750,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services to effectuate the purposes of this bill. Of that amount, \$515,000 is designated for grants to non-profit or county based agencies that will establish the Domestic Violence Resource Centers; \$75,000 for victim outreach services through the designated domestic violence agencies or their designees; \$60,000 for the costs of an independent evaluation; and \$100,000 for the Division of Youth and Family Services to perform the administrative duties.

In addition, the bill imposes a \$200 evaluation fee payable to a Domestic Violence Resource Center by persons who receive treatment and services from the center. The fee will be used to support the programs and counseling services offered by the center and to cover counseling costs incurred by referrals to outreach agencies. The fee may be reduced or waived based on a person's ability to pay. Since referral to a center by a court under the bill is optional and since it is not known how many persons will utilize the centers, the amount of revenue that may be generated for the centers is not known at this time.