

Washington's Domestic Violence Industry Analysts Predict Record Profits



Washington State's Domestic Violence (DV) coalition, confirmed by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services, is aptly named the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV). WSCADV recently hosted its first in-person event, Advocacy Days, after a prolonged period of online only events due to pandemic response. This event was a much needed opportunity for constituents to engage directly with legislators, discussing critical issues related to domestic violence and influencing legislative decisions.

This Coalition has been at the PR forefront of advocacy and support for DV victims. However, the persistent high rates of domestic violence in Washington suggest that something is amiss. The data from WSCADV and other state departments evidences the gravity of the situation.

It points to a gap between the state's advocacy efforts and the on-ground realities faced by mothers and children who are victims of domestic violence in Family Court.

Notably, WSCADV has been supporting House Bill 2377 (HB2377), a contentious choice, particularly in light of the Coalition's opposition to Kayden's Law which has already been passed in unanimous votes by several states. This is an odd position for the coalition, given the resistance from the demographic they serve – domestic abuse survivors.

A concerning aspect of WSCADV's and other organizations approach has been their lashing out toward individuals and organizations who disagree with their position. Multiple reports indicate that survivors of domestic violence, including organizations receiving funding from WSCADV that do not align with WSCADV's position on HB2377 faced explicit exclusion from the event. Moreover, those who did attend were instructed to refrain from expressing opposing views.

This silenced dissent from the stakeholders this policy is intended to protect during public discussions at the Washington State Capitol.

Critics have likened WSCADV's tactics to coercive control – a concept defined as exerting power over another for personal gain. This situation is particularly ironic for Family Court Survivors and Victims of Domestic Violence in Washington State, many of whom have reportedly reached out to the domestic violence coalition for support, only to be turned away.

The misuse of power by organizations charged with advocating for vulnerable populations can have far-reaching consequences. When advocacy groups prioritize their own agendas or succumb to external or institutional pressures over the genuine needs of the populations they serve, it can lead to a significant disconnect, undermining trust in these organizations and jeopardizing the rights of the vulnerable populations they are funded to protect.⁽¹⁾

The harassment and criminalization of advocacy work can lead to... regressive policies, effectively silencing voices that are essential for policy reform ⁽²⁾.

The consequences of such actions are not limited to the immediate community. They can also have a ripple effect on policy-making and funding allocation.

When a coalition is failing its constituents, it can lead to a reevaluation of services.

These types of organizational behaviors can lead to a reevaluation of funding and support from both the state and federal levels, increasing state liability and inviting audits for associated organizations.

The lives of mothers and children are at stake, and the current strategies may not be adequately addressing their needs or ensuring their safety. The high prevalence of domestic violence in a state known for its progressive stance suggests a need for a critical reevaluation of the strategies and policies in place.

References

1. Araiza, I. (2019). Ethical issues working with vulnerable populations. In P. Leavy (Ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Methods for Public Scholarship. Oxford University Press.
2. Haynes, D. F. (2023, April 22). Rule of Law Chronicles: Government Abuse of Power. JURIST - Legal News & Commentary.

Signed,

Concerned Citizens of The Family Court Crisis

This Family Court Series was formed by a community-led alliance of organizations, survivors, and professionals. This series aims to address the Family Court Crisis in Washington. The current system not only fails to protect mothers and children but perpetuates abuse and neglect.

Domestic Violence in WA Family Court Series Archive

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