Collateral consequences (continued from page 9)

Collateral consequences fall squarely within this bipartisan reform initiative to reduce state-created obstacles to successful employment and full enjoyment of civic life for those with criminal convictions in their past who have the potential to improve community safety and public health, reduce state expenses associated with recidivism, make available an underutilized human resource to Alaska’s businesses, and vastly improve the quality of life for the children of those convicted.

This work is not easy. It is, in fact, immensely difficult. It requires thoughtful, time-consuming analysis of hundreds of individual statutory and regulatory provisions and a careful, objective balancing of public interests. It is, nevertheless, work that is overdue and work that is a critical component of community health and safety.

Deb Periman, J.D., is a member of the Justice Center faculty. Simona Gerdts and Nessabeth Rooks contributed valuable research on this topic. For further reading on the collateral consequences of criminal conviction, see http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/a-z/c/collateral_consequences.html.

Employment Barriers and Domestic Violence

Deborah Periman

In 2003 the American Journal of Public Health published the results of an 11-city study looking at risk factors for femicide. In the article, “Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multisite Case Control Study,” investigators looked at differences in demographic, background, and relationship variables between a group of femicide victims and a control group of abused women. Of the variables examined,

the strongest risk factor for intimate partner femicide was the perpetrator’s lack of employment.

The researchers also found that “[i]n fact, abuser’s [sic] lack of employment was the only demographic risk factor that significantly predicted femicide risks” after controlling for other factors. Unemployment increased the risk of femicide four times over the risk associated with employed abusers. Moreover, unemployment appeared to underlie increased risks generally attributed to race and ethnicity.

The link between perpetrator unemployment and domestic violence is so significant that experts conclude any effective domestic violence prevention strategy must address unemployment and male poverty. Professor Deborah Weissman of the University

Sources


of North Carolina School of Law, who has written extensively on this issue, points to the work of researcher and law professor Jody Raphael which indicates that “the elimination of male poverty is a critical part of domestic violence prevention strategy.” In her article, “The Personal Is Political — and Economic: Rethinking Domestic Violence,” Professor Weissman also notes that the effect of economic instability on mental health is tremendous: “Poverty creates stress, households have diminished resources available to cope with stress, and stress is a source of violence.” A 1994 study by the U.S. Department of Justice cited by researchers Jennifer Nou and Christopher Timmins demonstrated that as household income decreases, family violence increases. At the time of the study, women in households where the annual income was below $10,000 disclosed suffering from domestic abuse at a rate five times higher than women from higher income households. Based on this evidence, Professor Weissman and others conclude that to reduce rates of domestic violence officials must focus on offender joblessness at sentencing, in probation, and in reentry services. Batterers who have jobs and concomitant ties to the community are less likely to reoffend.

Reducing the risk that a former offender will engage in family violence has important consequences for the growth and development of Alaska’s children. National data shows that over 35 percent of violence between partners occurs while at least one child is in the home. Children living in homes where one adult partner is abused are much more likely to be physically or psychologically abused than children living in homes without such violence. These children are also at increased risk of becoming batterers themselves, attempting suicide, and suffering from depression, obesity, substance abuse, and overall poor physical health in later life.

Deb Periman, J.D., is a member of the Justice Center faculty.

**New Staff**

Khirty Parker, Justice ‘08 and MPA (Criminal Justice emphasis) ’13, has joined the staff of the Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center (AJSAC) as a research professional. Ms. Parker has worked for the Justice Center as a research assistant and for the UAA Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) as a research associate. The AJSAC, established in 1986 and housed within the Justice Center, assists Alaska criminal justice and law enforcement agencies through the collection, analysis, and reporting of crime and justice statistics.