

Program Goals and Objectives

The overriding goal of the National Clearinghouse is to prevent the further victimization and erosion of legal rights of women who protect themselves and their children against life-threatening assaults by abusive partners, or who are coerced into crime by their abusers. Other project goals contribute to this end, and are detailed below:

Goal 1. To increase the sensitivity and responsiveness of key groups within the criminal justice system to the rights of battered women defendants and the unique dynamics involved in these cases.

Objectives:

- * heightened sensitivity, awareness, and skill levels among defense teams working with battered women defendants including battered women's advocates, defense attorneys and expert witnesses;
- * establishment of a central location for resources, practical information, training and technical assistance available to defense teams assisting battered women defendants;
- * improved quality of legal representation for battered women defendants;
- * positive changes in the outcome of cases involving battered women defendants, including a decrease in the number of women convicted and shorter sentences for those women who are convicted;
- * increased involvement by battered women's advocates in training their co-workers at the local and statewide levels;
- * increased awareness among defense teams and advocates about how racism and classism affect the defense of low-income women and women of color.

Goal 2. To create alliances between groups working with battered women defendants.

Objectives:

- * increased opportunities for communication, networking, and collaboration on advocacy efforts among the various groups working with battered women defendants;
- * increased skill-sharing and education among these groups.

Goal 3. To prevent the further victimization of battered women defendants by the criminal justice system, and to contribute toward the empowerment of battered women throughout the criminal justice process.

Objectives:

- * leadership development among battered women, incarcerated women, and women of color, including membership on the Board of Directors and National Advisory Council of the National Clearinghouse;
- * incorporation of battered women's input into the development of Clearinghouse projects, as well as their own legal defenses;
- * increased emphasis on intervention strategies aimed at combatting racism and classism in the criminal justice system;
- * greater understanding among battered women's advocates about ways of supporting and helping