

EVALUATION OF THE FIRST YEAR 'S SERVICE

Women in Transition Project

4634 Chester Avenue
Philadelphia, Pa. 19143

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INTRODUCTION

The Women in Transition Project began operating in September, 1971, after eight months of planning by a group of eight women known as the Task Force on Women in Transition. The program was initially geared toward women who were contemplating, or in the process of, separation or divorce. The service part of the program was based on a sister/small group model. This involved pairing a woman in transition with another woman ("sister") who had either been through separation herself or who was a particularly sympathetic person: it also involved encouraging the woman in transition to join one of the small groups created by the program, where she could meet other women in transition and other sisters who would be there to provide support. A Survival Manual was written to inform women in the program about their options for legal help, financial resources, housing, day care, consumer information, etc. Legal and therapeutic back-up services were arranged as the program got underway and a need for them became evident.

Many adjustments in this service model were made as the year went along as a result of the feedback received from the women in transition, their sisters, and others connected with the program. Even with these adjustments, however, it was clear as the program began its second year that other changes were necessary. The hope in planning the new program has been to preserve what has been valuable during the program's initial stages and to eliminate those aspects which are not working smoothly or which are not helpful to the women being served. The following report explains just how effective the program was for the women participating in it. At the end are the conclusions we have drawn and how we hope to structure the program in light of them.

SUMMARY OF WOMEN SERVED BY WOMEN IN TRANSITION
September 1, 1971 - June 30, 1972

This survey is based on the 85 women who completed the intake process (a long telephone interview), received the Survival Manual, and were paired with a sister, although some WITs chose to withdraw from the program after the initial phone call or the initial contact with the sister. The survey does not include women counseled by the paralegal counselors unless they participated in the rest of the program, nor does it include women who wished only to be referred to a lawyer or a therapist. It also does not include women whom we felt were too disturbed to participate in the regular program and were referred for therapy after the intake process. During the past year such referrals were often separate from the rest of the program. Developing the resources to arrange such referrals and following through on them was a learning experience for everyone connected with the program. In the coming year we hope to integrate the legal and therapy components more thoroughly into the regular program.

The information contained here was obtained by periodic reports from sisters and women in transition plus staff notations in the files about any contacts the women had with the office.

The date June 30 was selected because at this time the program closed for the summer, as many program participants were on vacation and because of staff vacations and lack of program funds.

I.	<u>Status on Entering</u>	Number of women
A.	Living with husband	23
B.	Separated	
	1. Less than 3 months prior to calling	33
	2. Longer than 3 months	16
C.	Separated with divorce in process	4
D.	Divorced	
	1. Within 3 months prior to calling	2
	2. Longer than 3 months	7
II.	<u>Status as of June 30, 1972</u>	
A.	Living with husband	16
B.	Separated	
	1. Less than 3 months	6
	2. Longer than 3 months	25
C.	Separated with divorce in process	10
D.	Divorced	
	1. Less than 3 months	3
	2. Longer than 3 months	6
E.	Don't know	19

EXPLANATION OF CHART

Status on Entering: The categories here include:

- Living with husband (23 women)
- Separated less than 3 months prior to calling program (33)
- Separated longer than 3 months prior to calling program (16)
- Separated with divorce in process (4)
- Divorced within 3 months prior to calling program (2)
- Divorced longer than 3 months prior to calling program (7)

The three-month distinction was chosen somewhat arbitrarily, although the first three months of separation are often more of a crisis period, when a woman in transition is struggling to keep financial and emotional equilibrium from day to day. After three months a woman in transition has usually come to terms with the fact that she is separated and is beginning to think about more long-range goals. Her need for intensive, immediate support after three months is not as great, and the likelihood of her needing treatment by a therapist is reduced.

Status as of June 30, 1972: These categories are:

- Living with husband (16)
- Separated less than 3 months before June 30 (6)
- Separated longer than 3 months before June 30 (25)
- Separated with divorce in process (10)
- Divorced within 3 months before June 30 (3)
- Divorced longer than 3 months before June 30 (6)
- Don't know (19)

The Don't Know category refers to those women who lost contact with the program before June 30 and whose situation was unsettled at the time contact was lost. There were 22 other women who became inactive before June 30, but in the course of participating in the program had made a decision about their lives (i. e. to remain with their husbands, to seek a divorce, to remain separated without pressing for legal action at the present time, etc.). Although the life of a woman in transition may remain in flux for years to come, for our record-keeping purposes the files of these 22 women are considered "closed."

Change of Status: Categories A, C, and I on this section of the chart all describe women whose situations basically did not change; C and I describe women whose situations changed in our analysis only because of the passage of time. That is, a woman who entered the program under the category "separated within 3 months" and was still separated as of June 30 would then be listed under "separated longer than 3 months." Category A, women whose situations stayed the same, includes women in all the different situations listed in Status on Entering, e. g. a woman who was living with her husband when she entered the program and was still living with him on June 30, a woman whose divorce was still in process, etc. The other categories (B, D, E, etc) indicate where change did occur.