Barriers for Rural Battered Women

Battered women, living in rural areas have many of the same experiences as battered women everywhere. However there are certain experiences and barriers that are unique to rural settings. The isolation felt by a battered woman creates difficulty being able to leave a violent partner. Battered women everywhere experience some form of isolation as controlled by their partners. For rural battered women, the isolation becomes magnified by geographical isolation in addition to other factors that greatly impact a rural battered woman’s isolation and chances of reaching safe shelter. Consider the following:

- A rural battered woman may not have phone service.
- Usually no public transportation exists, so if she leaves she must take a family vehicle.
- Police and medical response to a call for help may take a long time.
- Rural areas have fewer resources for women – jobs, childcare, housing and health care, or easy access to them is limited by distance.
- Extreme weather often exaggerates isolation – cold, snow, and mud regularly affect life in rural areas and may extend periods of isolation with an abuser.
- Poor roads impede transportation.
- Seasonal work may mean months of unemployment on a regular basis and result in women being trapped with an abuser for long periods.
- Hunting weapons are common to rural homes and everyday tools like axes, chains, pitchforks, and mauls are potential weapons.
- Alcohol use, which often increased in winter months when rural people are unemployed and isolated in their homes, usually affects the frequency and severity of abuse.
- Traveling to a big city can be intimidating to rural battered women and city attitudes may seem strange and unaccepting.
- A woman’s bruises may fade or heal before she sees neighbors and working with farm tools and equipment can provide an easy explanation for injuries.
- Farm families are often one-income families and a woman frequently has no money of her own to support herself and her children.
- Court orders restraining an abuser from having contact with a woman are less viable for rural women because their partners cannot be kept away from the arm if it is their only source of income.