



Bridgerland

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Local, state and regional news

Being there all hours, ready to listen

For 15 years CAPSA mobile crisis team has served valley

By Aaron Falk
staff writer

Vickie Smith remembers the first time she answered that phone call. "It was terrifying," she recalled of her trip to the hospital. "But the woman there was so grateful to have someone listen to her. She just wanted someone there."
Each day for the last 15 years, that

has been the job of the Community Abuse Prevention Services Agency's Mobile Crisis Team: To be there at all hours, ready to listen.

Now the Crisis Team's director, Smith oversees about 20 volunteers who spend two nights a month on call, prepared to help victims with protective orders, physical exams and police interviews.

Some nights go by without a call, but the statistics generally point to busy nights. CAPSA receives 50 to 60 calls each month. The center has sheltered 371 victims this year and logged more than 2,000 casework sessions since July.

"There's a bigger need than people fathom," said Chelsey Christensen, a caseworker and CAPSA's Rape Crisis Program coordinator. "But it's not a comfortable subject."

The members of the Mobile Crisis Team are the center's first line of defense in its battle against domestic violence.

"We couldn't do what we do without them," Smith said. "They are the first thing people see. They are our eyes and ears."

Volunteers are required to complete a 40-hour training program.

Most of the members — there are 18 on the books — are college stu-

dents studying social work, sociology or psychology. Some have been affected by domestic violence. All want to help.

Two people are on call each night of the week. One person handles domestic violence, while the other deals with rape cases.

When the call comes in, the volunteer generally meets with the victim at the hospital, police station or the CAPSA office in Logan.

"They are there to help them with emotional stability," Smith said.

Not having to wait for support

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provides people with a sense of safety that can sometimes lead to criminal charges being filed by otherwise hesitant victims.

"Everybody recognizes that the victim needs to be in control," Christensen said. "To have another person there

makes a big difference."

Crisis Team members have seen the long-term effects of their work. Christensen has watched as her first client has moved out of the shelter and started attending courses at Utah State University.

"It's a huge thing," she said. "People need someone to talk to, listen and believe them."

E-mail:
afalk@hjnews.com