

# Grant Update

## A Summary of Grant Activity

Governor's Crime Commission

NC Criminal Justice Analysis Center

### Kiran

Urban areas of North Carolina have experienced a significant growth in immigrant populations as the state's population has grown in recent decades. As a result of this growth, agencies providing legal and social services have had to prepare for the cultural differences that often exist between local citizens and new immigrants. Many would agree that immigrant victims of domestic violence are underserved. Since July 2008, the gap in services has narrowed tremendously due to a grant awarded to Kiran Inc. by the Governor's Crime Commission. Kiran, a multi-cultural, non-religious, community-based organization, provides direct and referral crisis intervention services encouraging South Asian victims of domestic violence to seek assistance by providing outreach, peer support and referrals in a confidential manner for individuals whose origins or backgrounds are from the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka or The Maldives.

#### *The Problem*

A 1998 study conducted in North Carolina found that South Asian women were not seeking help in abusive situations because they were unaware of available services. In 2002, researchers Anita Raj and Jay Silverman found that just over 40 percent of South Asian women studied in Boston reported physical and/or sexual abuse and more than 36 percent reported being victimized within the previous year. Of those reporting intimate partner violence, only one in 10 women received counseling or support services. In fact, just 3 percent of abused South Asian women in the study had ever obtained a restraining order against an abusive partner, compared to one third of all other ethnicities combined.

Immigrants may suffer higher rates of battering due to limited access to or knowledge of legal and social services and often originate from cultures that are accepting of domestic violence. Male violence against women is most prevalent in cultures that rigidly enforce gender roles and socially permit the chastising of women for inappropriate behavior. Language barriers and immigration status often prevent victims from reporting abuse since abusers often use their partners' immigration status as a tool of control. In addition, immigrant batterers and victims may not believe that penalties and protections of the legal system apply to them.

As explained by Kiran, three key aspects are commonly found within South Asian family relationships – collectivism, hierarchical power structure and gender role expectations. Families share a family-oriented culture in which interdependence is valued more than independence and personal goals are secondary to those of the family. In the hierarchical structure, power varies among family members based on gender, role and status. Often there is a strong preference for traditional, gender-



*Kiran Inc. provides direct and referral crisis intervention services to South Asian victims of domestic violence. They are housed in the Interact facility in Raleigh, N.C.*





*Left to Right: Rovina Nimbalkar, program director; Sumrien Ali, outreach coordinator; Avani Parekh-Bhatt, co-director; Vidya Raj, outreach coordinator*

stereotyped male and female roles and behaviors. Due to the dynamics of South Asian families, leaving abusive relationships frequently results in the victim's isolation from the South Asian community.

Generally, existing mainstream programs addressing domestic violence and sexual abuse are unable to provide culturally appropriate services to these victims. With an estimated population of roughly 29,000 South Asians residing in the Triangle area alone, culturally appropriate crisis counseling and referral services are much needed throughout the state.

### ***The Grant***

*Kiran*, the word from which the organization derived its name, means "ray of light" in Hindi. The project provides shelter options, legal resources and safety planning for victims. Services include securing emergency housing at local hotels or shelters, court accompaniment and maintaining support groups that address isolation and other issues. To gain better job market skills, victims are offered English language and vocational training. Clients receive education on victims' rights and victims' compensation in addition to referrals to childcare services, driving lessons, housing and employment opportunities.

### ***Goals and Objectives***

The overall goal of the *Kiran* project is to encourage South Asian victims to come forward, report abuse and seek help. To achieve this ultimate goal, the organization aspires to achieve the following seven objectives:

- Maintain crisis counseling services and a 24-hour hotline
- Maintain and increase participation in support groups for South Asian victims of domestic violence
- Present at community organizations, law enforcement, the medical community, and religious and social organizations to raise awareness of domestic violence in the South Asian community
- Create and translate materials for raising awareness and marketing the project through local media, newsletters, and advertisements
- Recruit volunteers from the local community
- Maintain advisory boards in key Triangle communities to help with outreach and fundraising
- Change community attitudes about domestic violence through engagement and awareness building

### ***Accomplishments***

As of Oct. 9, 2009, *Kiran* has assisted 82 clients, mostly from the Triangle and Charlotte areas. In October 2008, *Kiran* began a bi-weekly support group. The organization began a crisis hotline in September 2008 that operated Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. The program expanded to a 24-hour hotline in August 2009. Hotline call volume is expected to increase as outreach activities are held in additional locations throughout the state. Of the 82 clients served thus far, 59 have called the hotline for assistance. Volunteer recruitment and retention of individuals who speak various South Asian languages is overseen by the project director in order to provide hotline services to non-English speaking clients. To date, 20 volunteers

***"Only someone of the same cultural background and communicating in the same language can fully understand my experiences. Sometimes the description of the situation can get lost in translation to English."***

*— Sumita, Past Client of Kiran*

have been trained to work on the project's hotline. Volunteers also assist with court accompaniment, support group facilitation and outreach/awareness efforts. In October 2009, additional individuals received volunteer training in Charlotte, the Triangle and the Triad.

Kiran regularly conducts outreach programs for South Asian religious and social groups to raise awareness of domestic violence issues. Staff and volunteers have attended 29 South Asian cultural functions and festivals, several religious events and works with South Asian student organizations on college campuses and universities to raise awareness. The organization also interacts with other domestic violence agencies, law enforcement agencies and lawyers. Over 40 people signed up for volunteer opportunities at cultural events and about 100 individuals have joined the organization's mailing list. Raleigh-based WRAL-TV 5 news aired a story on the program in August 2009 which is still available on the channel's related web site. A volunteer manual is being developed and printed outreach materials such as quarterly newsletters and brochures for distribution in local South Asian stores and related venues.

Kiran works in concert with other local domestic violence agencies, such as Interact of Wake County, the Durham Crisis Response Center and the N.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence. They share resources with and accept referrals from other domestic violence agencies and collaborate with agencies serving South Asian clients. The program teamed up with Interact and SafeChild and serve together as partners under the Immigrant Seeking Safety Collaboration through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Legal Aid of N.C. and their Battered Immigrant Women's project provide assistance to clients of Kiran on an ongoing basis. Sister organizations throughout the country have been contacted for information on best practices as well. Recently, a grant was awarded from the Office on Violence Against Women to begin a project entitled Enhancing Culturally and Linguistically Specific Services for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking. This is a collaborative partnership for Durham County to serve South Asian and Hispanic/Latino immigrants, and African Americans and other minority populations in partnership with the Durham Crisis Response Center, El Centro Hispano and InStepp. The organization has also become a member of the Women of Color Caucus of the N.C. Coalition against Domestic Violence.

Kiran has been active in a variety of activities to raise funds to support their program. Activities have included a launch party for Kiran at the University of North Carolina School for Public Health, community house fundraisers, a ping-pong event, and a Labor Day concert at Duke University in association with the Duke Chapter of the Association for India's Development. RTI International and Dell have also provided funds and in-kind contributions. Program participants also create handmade items for sale to benefit the program. To sustain the program beyond Governor's Crime Commission funding, Kiran is identifying additional funding sources to apply for in early 2010, including the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and corporate giving programs, such as those at Cisco and RTI, where a large number of South Asians are employed.

### **Summary**

Kiran has provided essential services to a segment of the population that has been traditionally underserved. With continued support, Kiran can serve more members of the South Asian community and its' victims of domestic violence in a culturally sensitive setting.

***“The culture of silence among the South Asian community creates an environment that makes it even more challenging for our agency to provide outreach to victims of domestic violence.”***

*– Avani Parekh-Bhatt,  
Co-Director, Kiran*

***“It is easier to open up with people who can understand you better.”***

*— Sumita, Past Client of  
Kiran*

# Kiran

## GRANT SUMMARY

Area Served: Direct Services – Wake, Durham and Orange Counties  
Referral Services – Statewide

Implementing Agency: Kiran Inc.

Project Director: Rovina Nimbalkar

Funding: \$83,864.95 (Federal)

Overview: Kiran, a multi-cultural, non-religious, community-based organization, provides direct and referral crisis intervention services to encourage South Asians victims of domestic violence to seek help. Outreach, peer support and referrals are provided in a confidential manner.

Objectives: To maintain crisis counseling services and 24-hour crisis hotline to serve South Asians statewide

To maintain and increase participation among South Asian victims of domestic violence in support groups

To conduct presentations and trainings for community organizations, law enforcement, the medical community, and religious and social organizations to raise awareness of domestic violence in the South Asian community

To create and translate materials for raising awareness including use of the local media, newsletters, and advertisements to promote Kiran and its services

To recruit volunteers from the local community including colleges and universities

To maintain advisory boards in key communities to assist with outreach and fundraising

To help change community attitudes about domestic violence by building awareness and engaging community members

Accomplishments: Has assisted 82 clients since being awarded funding

After one year of operation, Kiran extended the crisis hotline hours to 24 hours everyday

Now offers bi-weekly support groups

Has conducted training and awareness presentations to South Asian social and religious groups and provides cultural sensitivity trainings for other professionals that work with South Asians. To date, Kiran staff and volunteers have attended 29 South Asian cultural functions and festivals, several religious events, and interacted with South Asian student organizations on college campuses and universities to raise awareness.

A news story highlighting the program aired in August 2009 on Raleigh-based WRAL-TV 5. Marketing material has also been placed in local South Asian stores and venues.

Has raised over \$8,400 through fundraising as of October 2009