

## **OPINION: Women suffer when state ignores trend**

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BROCKTON —

Barbara Tassinari may not have known her life was in danger before she was shot to death at her Abington home Tuesday night.

But even if she had known, we wonder if she would have had someplace safe to go or whether she would even know how to find help.

The state's safety net for domestic abuse victims has been decimated by budget cuts over the past several years. As a result, less help is available and less is spent on letting women know where to find it.

It cannot be written off as a coincidence that during the past three years — as funding for domestic violence programs was repeatedly cut — domestic homicides here tripled — from 14 in 2005 to 42 in 2007.

Yet here we are with 10 more domestic homicides in the first four months of the year and once again planning cuts.

Activists were in Boston Wednesday hoping to convince legislators to drop plans to cut another \$1.3 million in funds and we hope our representatives were listening.

It is a mistake — a dangerous one for women and an expensive one for the state — to continue gutting these programs.

For victims, the cost is obvious.

For the state, what you save now will almost surely be canceled out by the increased long-term costs of mental and physical health care for victims who survive as well as the counseling required by children who are forced to watch as their parents' relationship collapses in a series of increasingly violent incidents.

“It's disturbing to me, with a (steep) increase in the past two years in deaths related to domestic violence, that we would even be considering cutting funding,” said Stephanie Flaherty, executive director of DOVE Inc., which shelters 150 local families and answers 1,500 crisis calls yearly .

It's disturbing to us, too.

There's no arguing that, with a \$1.3 billion budget shortfall, painful cuts to state programs will be needed.

But the toll of cuts to these programs is measured in bodies.

As residents and legislators, we cannot ignore that without becoming culpable.