

VAWA S.T.O.P. SUMMARIES 2011- 2012

City of Brooklyn Park - \$60,554.00.

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Purpose: To create the Domestic Violence Evidence Enhancement Project with a domestic violence agency and the Brooklyn Park City Prosecutors Office for the purpose of systemically changing the way they respond to cases of domestic violence as it relates to law enforcement, addressing the needs of traditionally underserved communities, and improving community livability.

The goal of this project was to hold offenders accountable for their actions, reduce recidivism, reduce victimization, and provide excellent customer service, communication and education to domestic violence victims and the community. This project was based in the principles presented in the Domestic Violence Blueprint for Safety developed and implemented by the City of St Paul Police Department.

Police officers received training in reading criminal histories and enhancements, the knock-and-talk program as well as what they can do when a perpetrator is claiming self-defense. This allowed officers to be more accurate in their reading of criminal histories and led to a number of felony enhancements serving to hold some repeat offenders accountable for their actions. The project team developed a gone-on-arrival form that allowed officers to track follow up cases and pass them along from one shift to the next. This has resulted in a number of arrests. A responsibility of the Domestic Violence Coordinator was the review of 911 tapes and jail calls related to project cases. This has resulted in the identification of information of evidentiary value that in the past had been overlooked and more cases are being charged. The Domestic Violence Prevention Coordinator has been able to track not only the case dispositions but also the factors which led to that disposition, the number of cases where a prosecutor declined charges, as well as numerous other court related activities. The domestic violence agency partnered with the Brooklyn Park Police Department to house an advocate within the Police Department and this has greatly improved information sharing, and has enhanced their capacity to provide victim services and hold offenders accountable.

The Brooklyn Park Police Department feels there is a need for expanded community outreach as there is a large minority and immigrant population within the community and faces unique challenges as a result of the demographic composition. Focus needs to be given not only to the community but also to the system by which domestic violence cases are handled. The department is working to develop a Family Violence Unit that will be trained to provide a tailored response sensitive to the unique needs of victims and offenders on an individual basis essentially moving away from the blanket responses to a more individualized provision of service.

In summary, the Domestic Violence Evidence Enhancement Project has been valuable, allowing the Brooklyn Park Police Department to more effectively serve victims and hold offenders accountable for their actions. In addition, it has allowed them the opportunity to continue to uncover issues and concerns and implement policies and procedures that allow them to further improve their services.

Committee Against Domestic Abuse - \$120,980.

Julie Ellefson, 507-625-8688, juliee@inspire-hope.org.

Purpose: To develop a BluePrint for Safety Plan for Blue Earth County.

The project was able to make significant strides in law enforcement policy development and training in predominant aggressor and lethality assessment, beginning with the 911 dispatchers through arrest. Probation saw significant policy and practice improvements in its pre-bail hearing process. This included the addition of pre-trial release studies on misdemeanors, as well as felony level offenses. The project was able to develop and implement a BluePrint for Safety Plan in Blue Earth County, with substantial involvement from law enforcement agencies in Blue Earth County, including Mankato State University Security Department; Blue Earth County Probation; 911 Emergency Communications Center in Blue Earth County; and Blue Earth County jail and courthouse. The greatest challenge was getting criminal justice partners prosecution and the judiciary, to look at the limited resources available and reallocate them in ways that make the system more accountable to victims, raise perpetrator accountability, and take part in domestic violence offender bail hearings in a manner that effectively communicates accountability and system response.

Cornerstone Advocacy Services - \$108,650.

Susan Neis, 952-884-0376, susanneis@cornerstone.org.

Purpose: To build on the existing relationships between the domestic violence agency, law enforcement and prosecution in five target suburban cities and create lasting systems change in utilizing and adapting the City of St Paul Blueprint for Safety, then prioritizing and implementing the chosen Best Practices.

The project demonstrated the feasibility of a collaborative Blueprint model that works across multiple jurisdictions. The team consisting of the domestic violence agency, police department and city attorneys reviewed each agency's policies and procedures. They will incorporate Best Practice standards and developed training for police officers and prosecutors.

A Coordinator was hired to oversee this project. Meetings were held with prosecutors and police administration of the five cities to discuss how the project would be a victim centered approach to identify any gaps in current procedures. Two key tools were described, a practitioner's guide to risk and danger, and a report writing format that provides the answers to the questions interveners might have. The fundamental goal was to enhance victim safety and hold perpetrators more accountable.

Once the police departments in the five cities completed the training, they were provided with equipment to aid in their investigations including digital cameras with memory cards and audio recorders. The cameras were used to photograph the victim's injuries at the time of the incident and again during a follow up interview. The voice recorders allowed police officers to tape the victim's statements resulting in an accurate interpretation of her/his words. Law enforcement was trained to conduct lethality screens which consist of a series of questions to assist in determining risk. These investigatory tools have enhanced the ability of the city attorney to move forward with an evidence-based prosecution. These agencies have enhanced their policies and procedures to increase victim safety and hold perpetrators of domestic violence and stalking crimes accountable in a timelier manner.

Committees worked to establish protocols for the forfeiture of firearms as related to domestic violence cases and orders for protection. These protocols will rely on law enforcement agencies being proactive in the retrieval of prohibited firearms. A training curriculum was developed to be used in training the Minneapolis 911 Emergency Operators. This

training was designed to better educate the personnel that are most likely to be the first contact a victim of domestic or sexual violence encounters in the criminal justice system.

The success of this project has created an interest by several other suburban law enforcement agencies to enhance their response to domestic violence cases and in some cases establish specialized units within their respective agencies. The long term success of this project will be enhanced by expanding the training and education to other police departments as well as to the County Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Department and the County Adult Protection units.

Minneapolis City Attorney's Office - \$87,194.

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Purpose: To expand upon the successful collaboration established between the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office, the Minneapolis Police Department and the domestic violence agency in their collaboration with the Domestic Assault Unit of the Minneapolis Police Department.

The partnering agencies established a team and together developed a protocol designed to address identified gaps and trends. The team comprised of prosecutors from the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office, investigators from the Minneapolis Police Department and advocates from the local domestic violence agency hoped to increase victim safety and increase offender accountability through increased coordination and collaborations in addressing violations of No Contact Orders and gone-on-arrival police reports. Identified gaps included insufficient resources to monitor or enforce No Contact Orders which resulted in many violations never being reported and even if they were, they were often not prosecuted. There are also insufficient resources to follow up with a victim within the 24 hour arrest window to determine if the offender has returned or if follow-up investigation is needed.

Per the protocol, The City Attorney's Office now maintains a list identifying offenders and victims protected by No Contact Orders on current open cases being prosecuted. A prosecutor from the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office reviews the list and determines which cases will be monitored by conducting "knock and talks" during each week. They also review the list of gone-on-arrival cases generated during the week to determine which cases to focus on. After determining which cases to focus on each week, the team conducts "knock and talks." Because many victims and defendants are in transition, the City Attorney's Office began adding victim phone numbers and/or alternate addresses to the data base so that investigators and advocates could more easily make contact with victims. The City Attorney's Office has created a data base to log all cases reviewed by the team allowing the team to monitor the effectiveness of the new protocol. The team presented information about the project with the Suburban Prosecutor's Continuing Education Program about how to address violations of the No Contact Order. The probation officers in attendance were very excited to have a new tool to monitor their client's probation.

This grant has had a very positive impact on the results of domestic violence cases in the City of Minneapolis. The advocates and police investigators who have been working on this project have found the work very rewarding and have reported many positive stories of successful interactions with victims. Both the advocates and police investigators have gained new understanding about each other's jobs and how an advocate or investigator works with victims and what services they can provide. The follow up attention to cases has made cases stronger and the in-person support for victims by the advocates has made more victims remain connected during the prosecution of the case. They also report that they have begun to develop stronger relationships and know that in the future those stronger relationships will help them as they work with domestic violence victims.

Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Sexual Violence Justice Institute - \$148,266.

Donna Dunn, 651-209-9993, donna@mncasa.org.

Purpose: To support the prosecution of sexual assault cases by: strengthening the relationships between prosecutors, healthcare professionals, and victim advocates; developing and hosting Testimony Institutes to improve testimony skills and confidence; and creating resources to support successful case outcomes.

The project was initially proposed to strengthen the connection between prosecutors and healthcare professionals in sexual assault cases but expanded to address a recent decision made by the Minnesota Supreme Court around the use of expert testimony in adult victim sexual assault cases. The decision established a new opportunity for prosecutors to call expert witnesses to testify about common victim reactions to sexual assault. To respond to this change, the project developed and held 5 Expert Testimony Institutes around the state. The Institutes created an opportunity for prosecutors, experienced healthcare professionals, and experienced sexual assault advocates to increase their understanding of each other's roles in sexual assault cases, receive education and tools related to testifying, review mock case files and practice their testimony skills in a true-to-life courtroom setting. The format of the Institute was also modified for use in a 40-hour SANE training course with a focus on fact testimony and the importance of documentation when conducting exams. The models established by this project have been shared on both state and national levels. The project was supported by a multidisciplinary advisory group made up of prosecutors, healthcare professionals, and sexual assault advocates. The group provided professional insight and guidance in the creation of Testimony Institutes and the development of tools and resources and helped the project remain connected to emerging trends in the field. Outcomes of this project include: a more highly trained and comfortable group of potential experts; increased awareness of the change and skill amongst prosecutors in eliciting expert testimony in criminal sexual conduct cases; improved relationships between prosecutors, healthcare professionals, and advocates; tools and resources designed to support successful prosecution, and a model for future trainings.

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women - \$217,822.

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Purpose: To integrate a three level approach to address gaps in system responses to domestic violence cases.

First, to convene a statewide body made up of criminal justice system representatives that would actively gather and synthesize information, set priorities for statewide criminal justice efforts, and move promising practices forward across the state. Second, identify best practices and effective models in the criminal justice system. Third, provide technical assistance and training to domestic violence advocates, police and prosecutors, tribes, courts, and others regarding best practices and effective. Through this collaboration strong formal relationships were formed between statewide associations and departments that work on domestic violence issues. This is a level of statewide coordination and partnership that both supports and leads local efforts for coordinated criminal justice system response. A product of this workgroup was to update and distribute an electronic version of the Domestic Violence Prosecution Manual to all county attorneys in Minnesota. This manual was in great need of being updated, the last revision was done in 2004. This manual is a comprehensive guide for prosecuting domestic violence crimes from arrest through final disposition providing prosecutors with the laws, rules, tools and best practice guidelines. A coordinated community response approach was used by Coalition staff when providing technical assistance by bringing advocacy programs into the discussion with police and prosecutors, exploring ways to strengthen local collaboration and ultimately improve services to victims.

Range Women's Advocates - \$109,032.

Rob Raplinger, RRaplinger@lasnem.org.

Purpose: To expand the Coordinated Community Response Team (CCRT) and develop a Dangerous Domestic Violence Monitoring Team (DDVMT).

Both the CCRT and DDVMT teams were established. The teams improved dangerous domestic violence offender accountability by increasing their arrests, prosecutions and convictions. As well, the teams, comprised of law enforcement, tribal law enforcement, prosecution, medical personnel, and 911 dispatches, were able to connect victims to advocates to expand their knowledge of dangerous domestic violence offender behaviors and create and manage better safety plans for these victims of domestic violence. This project could be replicated in other rural areas.

Safe Avenues - \$46,453.

Carrie Buddy, 320-235-0962, cbuddy@willmarshelter.com.

Purpose: Multidisciplinary trainings, development of a multidisciplinary risk management team, development of a stalking protocol, development of victim and law enforcement materials.

The risk assessment on-line training and certification process was very successful. Various counties are excited about the risk assessment team in Kandiyohi County and are eager to replicate their success. The information and expertise is being shared. The partner agencies on this grant are the Kandiyohi County Attorney's Office, County Sheriff's Office, County Community Corrections and the Willmar Police Department. The comprehensive victim information packets were created and assembled in Spanish and English. Their distribution to victims is an ongoing process by advocates and law enforcement. Two successful multidisciplinary trainings were presented resulting in very good feed-back from the evaluations. The partner agencies adapted a stalking protocol that was to be put into ongoing use. However, law enforcement made a change in their tracking system that made it difficult to flag stalking. The current challenge is to adapt what was created to make it more usable. This is a project that can be, and is being, replicated in other counties. A significant aspect of the success of this project was that the partners are invested in its success.

Sexual Assault Program of Beltrami, Cass and Hubbard Counties - \$90,000.

Kim Zimmerman, 218-444-9524, sap_kimzim@hotmail.com.

Purpose: To create a safety audit team in Cass and Hubbard Counties.

The CHAT (Cass and Hubbard Counties Audit Teams) project provided and promoted closer coordination and better communications among all participants, including law enforcement, medical personnel, child protections services, mental health, social services, victim advocates, Department of Corrections, FBI victim service coordinators, and county attorneys and their victim service coordinators. Both counties were able to create teams and develop guidelines and protocols for working uniformly with sexual assault victims through cooperative assessments, needs of the victims, each agencies responsibilities and resources available. This project could be replicated in other rural areas.

Tubman - \$52,130.

Beverly Dusso, 612-825-3333, bdusso@tubman.org.

Purpose: To develop a domestic violence lethality assessment protocol.

Washington County Law Enforcement & Community Corrections partnered with Tubman to launch the usage of a Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment Tool that was developed by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. Tubman, along with officers from various law enforcement agencies in Washington County, provided training on the use of the Lethality Assessment Tool to police and probation officers in Washington County. As a result of the training and implementation of the Assessment Tool, systems change took place and relationships were built and strengthened between Tubman and legal professionals. For example, supervision of offenders who screened as high risk to reoffend were more intensively supervised, and Probation officers were regularly in communication with Tubman regarding any safety concerns. Also, judges ordered higher amounts of bail in cases where the lethality assessment indicated a higher probability of the defendant re-offending and/or causing great bodily harm to the victim. As a result of this program, all law enforcement agencies in Washington County are involved in the protocol and are now trained in the process. An unexpected outcome of this project was requests from surrounding state and local law enforcement units requesting and receiving training. This project could easily be replicated in both rural and metro areas of the state.

Winona County Attorney's Office – \$119,915.

Kalene Engel, 507-453-3646, kalene@engellawoffice.com.

Purpose: To develop a Blueprint for Safety Plan adapted to the Winona County criminal justice system.

The goal is to create systems change by improving the Winona criminal justice system's response to violence against women. The two main objectives: 1) Adapt the Blueprint for Safety to Winona through policy development that ensures a systemic victim-centered response to victims; and 2) Implement the Blueprint for Safety to Winona with training. The grant partners include: the Winona County Attorney's Office, Winona County Law Enforcement units, victim service providers, Winona County District Judges, Winona County Probation and Winona County Community Services.

By the end of the grant contract the collaborative partner's response to domestic violence victims has become more victim-centered. Additional positive changes include: law enforcement's victim notification cards were updated and translated into Spanish; their police report check lists were laminated; and they are conducting risk and lethality assessments. The check lists assisted officers when writing reports to produce a product that prosecutors would be willing to charge and pursue to conviction. A singular success is that officers have made great progress writing reports and gathering evidence. There are five jurisdictions in Winona County with significant differences between them. However, they are trying to conform on how they respond to domestic calls. The Winona County District Judges have identified domestic violence as a priority in their (bench) strategic planning for 2013. On-site technical assistance was given by the Battered Women's Justice Project (BWJP) to help create a set of four objectives for 2013. A Blueprint for Safety specific to Winona County will be printed March 1, 2013. The collaborative will continue to meet monthly. Every other month the group conducts a case review on 1 – 2 cases the County Attorney brings forward. The purpose is to determine if the Blueprint is being followed. Changes can be discussed and made as needed. Additionally, it is used as a measure of determining the quality of each agency's performance. Progress has been made, among the five jurisdictions, to conform on evidence writing and evidence collection when responding to domestic cases. The goals are to continue ongoing process and outcome evaluation of the project recommendations for improvement. Training will continue to be provided by partners. The partners plan to apply for a Federal rural grant to continue the work and

momentum that developed during the grant period. The greatest challenge was getting everyone to work together and trust between agencies before work on specific issues could commence. It has taken a great deal of work and training and remains to be seen if it can be sustained.