

LOCATION: City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, VA

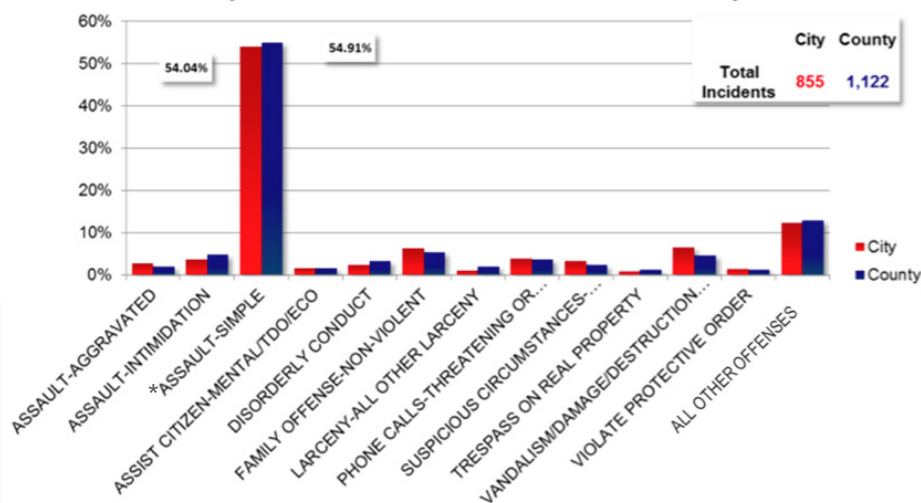
REQUESTOR: Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM) Policy Team, chaired by the VA Department of Corrections, District 9 Probation and Parole

REQUEST: In April 2012, the EBDM Policy Team, made up of criminal justice agencies from the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, VA, requested assistance in analyzing its system-wide response to domestic and intimate partner violence (DV/IPV) across two jurisdictions with a focus on improving offender accountability and victim outcomes.

Priorities

- Identify opportunities to create or enhance system-wide response framework
- Identify victim services and offender treatment
- Determine a DV/IPV assessment framework

Top DV/IPV Related Offenses
City of Charlottesville & Albemarle County



*In both the City and County, most DV/IPV-related incidents are classified as 'simple assaults.' All forms of assault are more common in the County than City.

Overview

The Diagnostic Center worked with the EBDM Policy Team to analyze DV/IPV response system-wide. Responding to the DV/IPV in these communities is complex and includes coordination of two jurisdictions and over 16 criminal justice agencies. In addition, several factors specific to Virginia needed to be considered including:

- the use of a magistrate system,
- a DV statute limited to certain family and child in common relationships, and
- a new IPV protective order and strangulation statutes which broaden the scope of DV cases but are not heard in the same court as DV cases.

Diagnostic Specialists conducted more than 40 interviews with local criminal justice officials, social service stakeholders and crime victims. Data analysis indicated a need to implement a comprehensive and coordinated approach to DV/IPV across the criminal justice system. The analysis illustrated how victims could access services at multiple points in the process, how offenders were moved through the criminal justice system, overlaps or gaps in services and how the system could improve its effectiveness.

The Diagnostic Center identified Blueprint for Safety as the best strategy for the communities and facilitated a peer exchange to learn more about the model and implementation requirements. The Center also facilitated a relationship with the University of Virginia to address data collection challenges. In addition, the Center provided access to judicial skills training in conjunction with the National Council on Juvenile and Family Court Judges and for law enforcement and probation officers to attend a state-wide DV/IPV conference.



Diagnostic Center Findings

- External constraints limit effective response to DV/IPV
- System-wide framework needs strengthening
- Victims face barriers to accessing systems
- Limited functionality of DV/IPV data systems
- Minimal interagency outreach coordination
- Treatment and services gaps



Diagnostic Center Recommendations

- Implement a comprehensive and coordinated approach like Blueprints for Safety (Blueprint)
- Focus on victim services and offender treatment interventions
- Use a multidimensional data gathering and analysis strategy to assess impacts on DV/IPV issues

Community’s Response

The communities adopted Blueprint. It uses interagency policies, protocols, case processing procedures and information sharing to:

- Maximize the ability of the community to gain some control over a DV/IPV offender,
- Use that control to intervene quickly when there are new acts of violence, intimidation or coercion, and
- Shift the burden for holding an offender accountable from the victim to the system.

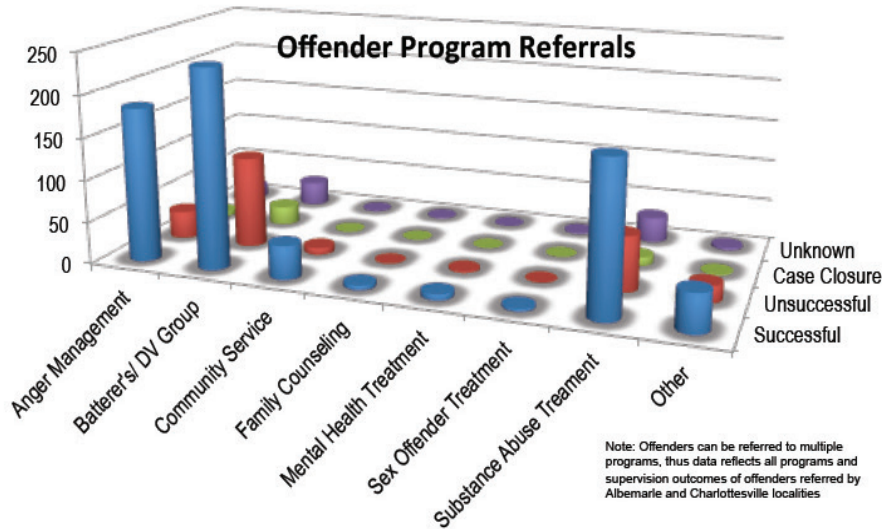
At the request of the EBDM Policy Team, the Diagnostic Center provided support for Blueprint implementation by facilitating a peer exchange with representatives from St. Paul, MN and Praxis International to learn more about the model and implementation requirements. In addition, the Diagnostic Center sent two judicial officials to a National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges workshop and hosted a local training session for judicial officials to enhance their skills in the processing of DV/IPV cases. With the support of OJP, two law enforcement officers and one probation officer were able to join a team of local stakeholders for a training at Virginia’s Domestic Violence Homicide Reduction Conference. Also, the Diagnostic Center provided technical assistance to help design data collection methods and baseline indicators for each decision point in the criminal justice system.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Full implementation of Blueprint is an ongoing effort. The EBDM Policy Team established working groups to identify gaps in policies and practices then facilitated the development of coordinated response protocols. The communities have a better understanding of the power of stakeholder buy-in and support and the value of incorporating all stakeholders into a collaborative system-wide framework. The criminal justice system has been able to incorporate its understanding of how the dynamics of DV/IPV impact case handling, work support victim safety strategies and inform decision-making for DV/IPV response.

The Diagnostic Center continues to provide ongoing, remote technical assistance to support the implementation of Blueprint and enhancing each agency’s capacity to respond to DV/IPV cases. This effort includes identifying and collecting baseline indicators for each agency, reporting the indicators and assessing outcomes.

The Diagnostic Center recognizes the challenges ahead as the communities seek to implement a comprehensive response to DV/IPV cases to include: continued enhancement of agency-specific skills needed to handle cases; completing each agency’s assessment and gap analysis needed to align protocols to Blueprint; and implementing data collection and assessment strategies in order to ensure focused, data-driven responses.



What is the Diagnostic Center?

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs launched the Diagnostic Center in Spring 2012 to serve as a technical assistance resource for state, local and tribal policymakers seeking to implement data-driven strategies to combat crime and improve public safety in their communities. The defining characteristic of the Diagnostic Center is its approach to being smart on crime by helping state and local leaders to use local data to apply what works in criminal justice in their communities. This effort ensures that limited local resources are invested wisely, federal assets are leveraged where they are needed most and communities reap better public safety outcomes.

“Victims of crime and the community deserve a criminal justice system that is committed to practices that have been proven to work – the Diagnostic Center helped us identify the right practices.”
- Pat Smith, Executive Director, Offender Aid and Restoration/Jefferson Area Community Corrections

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