

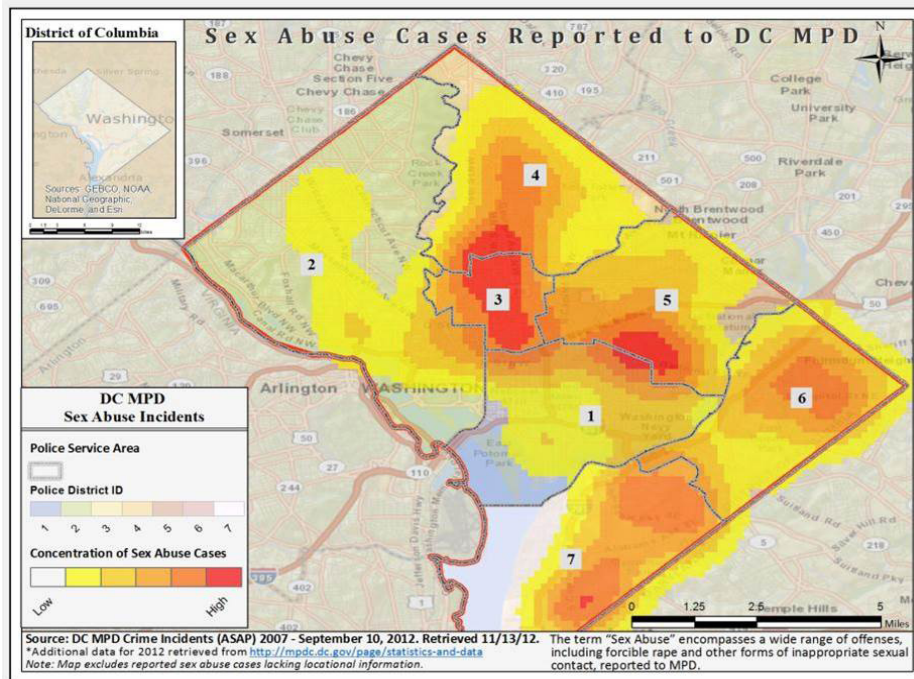
LOCATION: Washington, DC

REQUESTOR: DC Office of Victim Services (OVS)

REQUEST: OVS requested assistance in analyzing the processes for reporting and non-reporting adult victims of sexual assault, from medical service through prosecution, including the recommendation of evidence-based interventions to improve information sharing and coordination of services for victims.

Priorities

- Conduct a gap analysis of the system-wide sexual assault process
- Identify how services to sexual assault victims/survivors could be improved
- Identify models practices and interventions to help improve victim services



Overview

The sexual assault response in DC involves coordination among multiple entities including first responders, investigators and prosecutors. The Diagnostic Center worked with OVS, law enforcement, prosecutors, medical professionals and local universities to assess victim services and identify potential models for response improvement. The Diagnostic Center conducted 26 interviews and collected data from eight criminal justice agencies during the diagnostic phase. The Diagnostic Center then matched a series of recommendations and data-driven models to those needs.

Recommendations included enhancing victim-centered response strategies; addressing gaps in agencies' ability to share data and provide updates; developing sexual assault response protocols; establishing a sex abuse public awareness campaign; targeting university populations for sexual violence prevention programs; and reviewing and instituting other promising system-wide response models.

OVS hosted a one and a half day retreat for the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to begin implementation of the Diagnostic Center's recommendations. OVS utilized multiple national experts to train SART stakeholders on evidence-based practices and use of data collection to inform their operations, case review and policy making.



Diagnostic Center Findings

- Victims face barriers to accessing services
- High rate of sexual assault incidents
- Challenges sustaining Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners and provider operations
- Lack of cohesiveness and information sharing with SART
- Inconsistent protocols to provide a victim-centered response
- Multi-jurisdictional and Violence Against Women Act implementation challenges



Diagnostic Center Recommendations

- Enhance victim-centered response strategies
- Address gaps in agencies' ability to share data and provide victim case status updates
- Develop sexual assault response protocols
- Establish a sex abuse public awareness campaign
- Target university populations for sexual violence prevention programs
- Review and institute other promising system-wide response models

"The opportunity to have an unbiased outside team of experts facilitate conversations among stakeholders was invaluable."

***- Melissa Hook,
Director of the DC Office
of Victim Services***



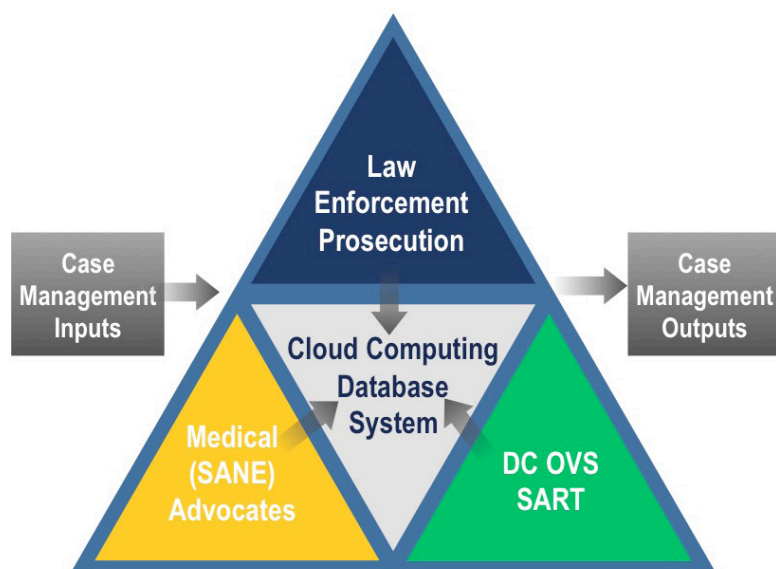
Community's Response

OVS focused its response on two recommendations: (1) address gaps in agencies' ability to share data and (2) develop sexual assault response protocols.

OVS hosted a retreat where it identified the mission and values for the SART. Retreat participants included 16 SART representatives and leadership from the Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime, the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Metro Police Department. Participants documented strengths and weaknesses, developed protocols to standardize care and procedures for victims and identified opportunities to more seamlessly work together.

Building upon recommendations outlined in the diagnostic analysis, OVS also acquired a cloud case management system to track reporting and non-reporting clients and their cases, improving data sharing and SART's ability to provide timely information to victims.

In addition OVS hired and committed ongoing funding for two full-time sexual assault forensic scientists who reduced processing time of sexual assault kits from 120 to 30 days while increasing capacity to analyze evidence and improve its quality.



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.

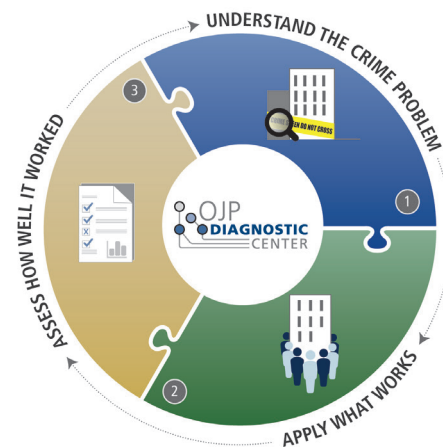
Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Having an unbiased team of experts conduct a review of victim services, offer recommendations modeled after successful programs and facilitate the discussion among the stakeholders increased overall cooperation and decreased previous polarization.

Building team cohesion with SART was central in OVS laying a foundation to improve victim services. Through the retreat, SART was able to communicate challenges, identify successes and subscribe to a set of protocols for administering victim services.

Since engaging with the Diagnostic Center, OVS developed and strengthened its partnerships within the community, which have improved victim services by reducing wait time, identifying patterns in in drug- and alcohol-facilitated sexual assaults and improving prevention outreach to college students and young professionals. OVS is also contracting with an Independent Expert Consultant under the DC Sexual Assault Victims' Rights Amendment Act of 2014 who provides evidence-based, victim-centered guidance.

As the community's effort is ongoing, so is the Diagnostic Center support. The Diagnostic Center continues to provide ongoing remote technical assistance to support their efforts.



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