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**Evaluating a Multi-Disciplinary Response to  
Domestic Violence: The DVERT Program in  
Colorado Springs**

**FINAL REPORT**

Final Report Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted to the <sup>Date:</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
Colorado Springs Police Department and  
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# Evaluating a Multi-Disciplinary Response to Domestic Violence: The DVERT Program in Colorado Springs

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## Abstract

This study examines the Colorado Springs Police Department's Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (DVERT). Through a "researcher-practitioner partnership" grant from the National Institute of Justice, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Solutions, Inc. conducted a process evaluation of this unique team. The evaluation effort included a careful examination of case files (1996-2000), observations of DVERT activities, interviews with members of DVERT, and interviews with victims of domestic violence.

Overall, we found that DVERT's philosophy and activities differ from the traditional police response to domestic violence. DVERT follows a multidisciplinary approach – it includes over 25 partner agencies that work together to keep the victim safe from harm. Police officers and detectives, victim advocates, prosecutors, child service providers, probation officers, and health care professionals intervene when serious domestic violence cases occur in Colorado Springs. Interventions include: contacts with victims by police and advocates; counseling of victims, batterers, and children; arrests; support in court; and a full range of family services. DVERT's activities have resulted in better services for victims and their children, more awareness of domestic violence by the criminal justice system, the perception of a reduction in violence, and a high level of cooperation and collaboration among city and county agencies.

# Evaluating a Multi-Disciplinary Response to Domestic Violence: The DVERT Program in Colorado Springs

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## Introduction

The problem of domestic violence is not new to Colorado Springs. Over the past 20 years the Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) has received over 15,000 calls for service annually for domestic violence. The response to domestic violence by the police has been innovative and creative, dating back to the 1980s when the CSPD participated in the replication of the Minneapolis spouse assault experiment. Colorado Springs was one of six sites that implemented a randomized experiment to test the notion that arrest of domestic violence perpetrators could reduce subsequent recidivism. Learning from that experience, CSPD formed a non-traditional domestic violence unit in 1996 -- the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team or DVERT. Through grants from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and the Violence Against Women Grant Office (VAWGO), DVERT assists victims of the most serious domestic violence incidents.

In 1998, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Solutions, Inc. received a grant from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to form a "researcher-practitioner partnership" with DVERT. The idea was to build a research capacity within DVERT and to conduct a process evaluation of the program. In addition, it was hoped that the process evaluation would set the stage for an impact evaluation through the collection of baseline data. For the past three years a

*21<sup>st</sup> Century Solutions, Inc.*

strong working relationship has developed between 21<sup>st</sup> Century Solutions, Inc. and DVERT. New databases have been developed, baseline data have been collected, and computers have been purchased to analyze data by DVERT staff.

This study is the result of an 18-month evaluation that examined the inner workings of DVERT. We rely on data from case files, interviews with DVERT partners and victims of domestic violence, and observations of the activities of the participants.

The report is divided into five sections: 1) Background, 2) Research Methods, 3) Findings, 4) Concluding Remarks, and 5) Key Findings. The Background section sets the stage for the process evaluation. Here, we describe the CSPD, discuss the DVERT concept, and examine previous research to provide a context for the evaluation. Section 2 on Research Methods describes the data that were collected and the way in which those data were analyzed. The third section presents our findings and includes a discussion of each of DVERT's three levels of operation, describes the perceptions of DVERT staff, and gives the views of a small sample of victims of domestic violence. Section 4, Concluding Remarks, briefly discusses the next stage of development for DVERT and lays the groundwork for an impact evaluation. The fifth and final section, Key Findings, summarizes the results of the evaluation.

## Section 1: Background

The Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) serves a population of over 350,000 with over 750 employees, including 528 sworn officers. Over 40% of the officers respond to calls for service on a regular basis. Chief Lorne Kramer has led the department for the past 13 years and has followed a community policing philosophy that focuses on "total problem-oriented policing." Like most police agencies in the 1990s, CSPD implemented community policing throughout the department, but has done so methodically, strategically, and thoroughly. Chief Kramer's vision of total problem oriented policing has been adopted by his executive leaders, managers, supervisors, line officers, and civilians. A survey of patrol officers by 21<sup>st</sup> Century Solutions, Inc. in 2000 found that "nearly 86% of patrol officers reported the completion of a problem-oriented project in the last two years (since 1998). Half of the officers felt the projects were somewhat successful and 36% felt they were very successful" (Uchida et al, 2001).

As further evidence of its success, CSPD received funding from the COPS Office to establish a Community Policing Demonstration Center, one of only 21 jurisdictions across the country to receive awards. With those monies, the department invested in a new computerized case management system, developed innovative programs, and advanced problem oriented policing.

The department has decentralized a number of patrol and investigative functions through its three divisions -- Falcon, Gold Hill, and Sand Creek. Each substation, located in different sections of the city has a commander, crime analysts, investigators, traffic officers, neighborhood policing units, and patrol officers. Over the years, CSPD

has transformed itself from a traditional agency to a community-policing department. It is within this context that DVERT has developed and flourished.

### **Funding History**

Since 1996 CSPD has received federal funds to establish and institutionalize the DVERT. This unit, led by Detective Howard Black, involves a partnership and collaboration with the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (hereafter called the Center), a private, non-profit victim advocacy organization, and 25 other city and county agencies.

DVERT was first funded by a grant from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office). In the years that followed, the Violence Against Women Grant Office (VAWGO) and Victim Assistance and Law Enforcement (VALE) have continued to fund the operation.<sup>1</sup> Under the first COPS Office grant, DVERT fixed deficiencies and breakdowns within the criminal justice and social services systems, enhanced law enforcement and prosecution in domestic violence cases, and increased the safety of victims and containment of perpetrators.

With funds from the Violence Against Women Grant Office, DVERT addressed intervention needs, expanded services, and reach out to more agencies that could assist victims of domestic violence. The VAWGO grants provided funds to the CSPD, El Paso County Sheriffs Office and rural police agencies for overtime and for equipment, computers, and software. DVERT used monies to employ battered women advocates and caseworkers to assist with children. In addition DVERT expanded its legal advocacy services. Finally, DVERT staff developed comprehensive domestic violence training



programs for law enforcement, prosecutors, parole and probation officers, victim advocates, and caseworkers.

## **Key Issues in the Response to Domestic Violence**

The research context for the DVERT program can be found by examining the literature on the police response to incidents of domestic violence over time. In particular, Colorado Springs has a unique history of involvement in “cutting-edge” domestic violence programs.

In general, the police response to domestic violence has been slow and inconsistent over the last 150 years. This attitude appears to mirror the way in which society has looked upon spouse abuse as a criminal act (Hirschel, et al. 1992). Over the last two decades, however, the public debate about spouse assault has led to dramatic changes in the way in which police respond to incidents of domestic violence.

## **The Minneapolis Spouse Assault Study and Replication Studies**

This change has been fueled, in part, by the findings of the Minneapolis Spouse Assault Experiment conducted by the Police Foundation in 1981-82. Sherman and Berk’s field experiment (see Sherman and Berk, 1984a and 1984b, and Berk et al., 1988) assessed the effects of different police responses to individuals apprehended for spouse assault. They found, using a six-month outcome period, that arrest was the most effective of three standard methods used by the police (mediation, separation and arrest) to reduce domestic violence. This experiment led to an intense debate over arrest as the preferred

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<sup>1</sup> From these three sources DVERT has received almost \$3.2 million.

response to misdemeanor domestic violence. As a result of this ground-breaking experiment, NIJ funded six sites to replicate the Minneapolis experiment: Dade County, FL (see Pate, et al 1991), Atlanta, GA<sup>2</sup>; Charlotte, NC (see Hirschel et al., 1992a and 1992b); Milwaukee, WI (see Sherman et al, 1991 and Sherman et al, 1991); Omaha, NE (see Dunford et al., 1989, Dunford et al, 1990 and Dunford, 1992); and Colorado Springs, CO (see Berk et al., 1991 and 1992).

The six replications led to mixed results. In Charlotte, researchers concluded that arrest was not a significant deterrent for misdemeanor spouse assault (Hirschel and Hutchison, 1992). In Omaha, arrest did not appear to deter subsequent domestic conflict after six months any more than separation or mediation (Dunford, 1992). But longer-term follow up shows that arrest can even create more violence in Omaha (Sherman, 1992). In Miami, victims reported that arrest had a strong deterrent effect, similar to the Minneapolis experiment (Pate et al, 1991).

In Milwaukee, Sherman found that arrest makes some kinds of people more frequently violent against their cohabitants. "The evidence shows that while arrest deters repeat domestic violence in the short run, arrests with brief custody increase the frequency of domestic violence in the long run among offenders in general. The evidence also shows that, among cases predominantly reported from Milwaukee's black urban poverty ghetto, different kinds of offenders react differently to arrest: some become much more frequently violent, while others become somewhat less frequently violent" (Sherman, et al., 1992:139).

Sherman (1992a) sums up the findings of these experiments and further analyses in his book on *Policing Domestic Violence*:

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<sup>2</sup> A final report was not produced by Dr. Stuart Deutsch at Georgia Tech.

- Arrest increases domestic violence among people who have nothing to lose, especially the unemployed;
- Arrest deters domestic violence in cities with higher proportions of white and Hispanic suspects;
- Arrest deters domestic violence in the short run, but escalates violence later on in cities with higher proportions of unemployed black suspects;
- A small but chronic portion of all violent couples produce the majority of domestic violence incidents; and
- Offenders who flee before police arrive are substantially deterred by warrants for their arrest, at least in Omaha.

Of importance to our evaluation is the experiment in Colorado Springs. Here, suspects apprehended for misdemeanor spouse abuse were assigned at random to one of four treatments: 1) an emergency order of protection for the victim coupled with arrest of the suspect; 2) an emergency order of protection for the victim coupled with immediate crisis counseling for the suspect; 3) an emergency order of protection only; or 4) restoring order at the scene with no emergency order of protection. Berk et al (1992) found that the balance of evidence supports deterrent effect for arrest among “good risk offenders,” who presumably have a lot to lose by being arrested (1992:172). They also found that according to official data, arrest did not deter repeat domestic violence, while in victim interviews, and they found that arrest did deter repeat domestic violence.

Despite the confusion over the findings from the six sites, feminist groups and others concerned with domestic violence demanded a stronger criminal justice response to spouse assault. At the same time, a more comprehensive and inclusive strategy has developed to respond to domestic violence. Rather than simply relying upon the criminal justice system to react to spousal assaults, battered women’s shelters, victim advocates, and other entities have worked to respond to domestic violence in a more holistic or

systemic way. During the latter part of the 1990s, the emphasis has moved from a strictly enforcement mode to a multidisciplinary or team-based approach to solving domestic abuse. This is evident in the development of DVERT.

In March 1996, Chief Kramer and his staff made a decision to establish a domestic violence coordinator position within the department. Chief Kramer believed that law enforcement alone could not respond adequately to the problem of domestic violence. A more comprehensive approach was needed. The chief selected Detective Howard Black for the domestic violence coordinator position. Det. Black's experience as the project director for the Colorado Springs replication experiment and his credibility among his police peers made him well suited for the job. He was knowledgeable about the problem of domestic violence, understood the research trends and changes in the field, and had built up a reputation for working with community groups and victim advocates. Furthermore, as a member of the gangs unit and the hostage negotiation team within the department, he was well respected by his colleagues. When he took over the job, Det. Black evaluated domestic violence policies, procedures and protocols and recommended necessary revisions and improvements. He evaluated state domestic violence and stalking laws, developed more efficient responses to victims of stalking, and participated in the establishment of a statewide tracking system for domestic violence perpetrators. Additionally, in keeping with CSPD's philosophical orientation toward community policing efforts, Det. Black facilitated community-based efforts to refine and enhance the collective responses in the investigation of domestic violence. The DVERT program emerged from these developments in the mid-1990s.

## **Systemic and Multidisciplinary Approaches**

DVERT was developed as a systemic and multidisciplinary response to spouse assault. It involves the coordination of criminal justice, social service, and community based programs (National Resource Council, 1998). DVERT's operations incorporate and combine many of the proven strategies studied in three locations in the last decade.

Three evaluations of the systemic response to spouse assault have been recently documented. One study looked primarily at process variables – that is the impact of coordinated efforts on arrest rates, prosecution rates, and rates of mandated counseling (Gamache et al., 1988). The study found a statistically significant increase in the percentage of calls that resulted in arrest and the percentage of arrests that resulted in prosecution following establishment of a community intervention project in each of three communities. There was also a significant increase in the percentage of men mandated to counseling in each of the communities, indicating that coordination among various parts of the criminal justice and social service systems may increase criminal justice responses to domestic violence. However, arrest, prosecution, and treatment do not necessarily ensure a reduction in future violence.

The second study examined the impact of public education and joint police/social worker home visits on recidivism and the use of services (Davis and Taylor, 1997). Residents of New York City public housing projects in three police districts were randomly assigned to receive public education about domestic violence services or to a control group. At 6-month follow-up, no significant differences were observed in the number or severity of victim-reported incidents of repeat violence between the experimental and control groups; however, both of the experimental groups were

significantly more likely to call the police for the repeat violence than were control groups.

The most recent systemic approach to the domestic violence problem is documented in "Beyond Arrest: The Portland, Oregon Domestic Violence Experiment" (Jolin et al., 1998). The program in Portland operated under the expectation that domestic violence could be reduced by increasing prosecutions and enhancing victim empowerment. Jolin and her colleagues examined whether program interventions increased prosecutions of misdemeanor domestic violence cases, increased victim empowerment, and led to reductions in domestic violence. They also tested the notion that arrest followed by enhanced support services for the victim, reduces the recurrence of domestic violence more effectively than arrest alone.

The researchers used a "double-blind" randomization design to assign eligible cases to a program treatment group or to a control group, which did not receive the program intervention. Findings show that significantly fewer of the treatment group (compared to the control group victims) reported that they had experienced further violence during the 6 months following the arrest of the batterer. Arrest plus police-initiated follow-up compared to arrest alone led to reductions in subsequent self-reported domestic violence. Also, increased victim perception of empowerment led to reduction in self-reported domestic violence. Finally, arrest plus police-initiated follow-up compared to arrest alone led to increased prosecutions, convictions, and sanctions for batterers.

From these studies and through discussions with DVERT staff, we developed relevant research questions and methods.

## Section 2: Research Questions and Methods

### **The DVERT Process.**

We tracked DVERT cases as they came in to the unit to the closure or “de-activation” of the case. This meant coding information from cases that originate through referrals from a variety of agencies, including the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, the Department of Human Services, battered women’s shelters, the Humane Society, and others involved in DVERT. We followed cases as they went through the entire process.

We asked the following research questions: How many cases have been referred to DVERT? By whom? How many cases have been accepted? Denied? How are these cases handled through problem-oriented policing techniques?

Other general questions included: what are the characteristics of domestic violence incidents? Demographic information about the victim and suspect (age, race, gender, marital status, education, economic level, etc.); the presence of alcohol or drug use; presence or use of a weapon; previous criminal history; mental health; presence of children; and other data were collected.

How many times did the victim call the police? Did the suspect have a criminal history? How many times did the victim seek assistance from non-police services? Was there a pattern or history of abuse?

Where possible, we explored what happens after arrest. For example, how many cases were prosecuted? What was the disposition by the court? What was the level of punishment?

Lastly, we examined DVERT's links to community policing: How does DVERT follow the principles of community policing in terms of community engagement, organizational adaptation, and problem-oriented policing?

**The Collaboration Process.** As part of the evaluation, we observed the collaborative process that occurs among DVERT members. We also conducted interviews of DVERT staff to gain their understanding of the collaborations. We asked: How do members interact? What are the dynamics of the group? How are decisions made? What factors are critical in the decision making process? Are there elements of the collaboration that can be learned and replicated elsewhere?

**Victim Perspectives.** With additional funding from NIJ we were able to conduct interviews with victims of domestic violence. We asked a number of questions concerning their experiences with their spouses/co-habitants, their perspectives of DVERT, and the impact the program has had on their lives.

#### **Data Collection Instruments**

We gained access to a number of records through the DVERT office:

- 1) police records of the perpetrator and victim, including calls for service data, arrest reports, and criminal histories;
- 2) DVERT case files; and
- 3) Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence files on victims.

Coding sheets were developed for the information within these documents.

Copies are included in the appendix.



## **Interviews**

Dr. Jennifer Mastrofski interviewed 19 persons having key affiliation with DVERT. Persons interviewed were identified using two different methods. First, Dr. Uchida, Detective Black, and a long-term DVERT staff member suggested names of persons with long-term histories on the project. This process resulted in a core list of about 10-12 key persons. Second, after each interview was concluded, interviewees were asked to name three persons who he/she felt would be important to interview as well. Using this broadly defined snowball sampling, then another 12 persons were scheduled for interviews. From this two-step process, 21 total interviews were scheduled, two persons cancelled, resulting in 19 completed interviews. They represented law enforcement, victims' advocates, caseworkers, attorneys, medial professionals, and DVERT staff. Questions covered five major areas: history of DVERT, roles of partner agencies, impact of DVERT on domestic violence, nature of collaboration among partner agencies, and suggestions for improving DVERT.

Dr. Mastrofski and Ms. Deborah Dawson conducted 18 face-to-face interviews and one telephone interview with victims of domestic violence. Staff from DVERT selected previous and current clients for the interviews. A 30-item questionnaire (see appendix) covered five major areas: previous domestic violence incidents, attitudes toward DVERT, perceptions of the criminal justice process, perceptions of social service assistance, and overall changes they would recommend. The group of victim interviewees should not be viewed as a representative sample of DVERT victims. The results from these interviews are therefore interpreted with caution.

### Section 3: Findings

Overall we find that DVERT is a unique and active blend of social service and criminal justice components. More importantly, DVERT is unlike any other domestic violence unit situated within a police agency. One of the major differences between DVERT and other police programs is its view that *the safety of the victim is the primary concern*. This philosophy drives the way in which advocates and law enforcement work with clients and how they work within the criminal justice system and social service system. This attitude is in contrast to other special units that are more concerned with an arrest and prosecution of the batterer. This also reflects the input of advocates at the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and other partner agencies.

Second, the program does not follow the traditional police model for a special unit. In most police agencies, a domestic violence unit serves as the coordinator for department activities. The traditional unit is usually comprised of police officers and a victim advocate, but the majority of people are from law enforcement. The traditional unit responds to serious domestic violence situations, serves as a referral unit for patrol (officers will transfer calls or incidents to the unit), and works with social service agencies in its jurisdiction (provide some training and information about police practices). The main focus of these special DV units is enforcing the law and bringing cases through the criminal justice system.

DVERT is different from this model. As mentioned above, DVERT is a "systemic response" to domestic violence situations because it involves the coordination of criminal justice, social service, and community-based agencies. DVERT involves efforts to establish communication among criminal justice and social service agencies, to

establish advocacy services to meet victims' needs, and to implement policies aimed toward more aggressive apprehension and sanctioning of offenders.

It is also important to point out that cases do not always begin with an arrest or call for service. This subtle but important difference sets DVERT apart from other police-based programs. In most situations, DVERT accepts a case because the client is in imminent danger, not necessarily because an arrest has occurred. This is in stark contrast to the way in which other law enforcement departments operate and the way in which other researchers have documented and focused upon the *police* response to domestic violence. DVERT is truly a *multi-disciplinary* response to domestic violence. It takes a more balanced approach to the problem of domestic violence, as it spreads the responsibility for the problem to a number of agencies, not just the police.

This philosophy permeates the unit in a number of ways. The best example is the way in which decisions are made regarding acceptance of cases. Representatives of the CSPD, the Center, the Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Humane Society, as well as a local physician make decisions about accepting or not accepting cases. Cases are discussed openly and freely. Disagreements occur about the seriousness of the case, but a consensus about accepting or rejecting the client is always attained. Another example is in the physical location of the unit. DVERT is located in a building apart from the police department and other partners.<sup>3</sup> About 25 staff members work in these offices, including DVERT coordinator Det. Howard Black. The overwhelming majority of DVERT staff is **not** formally affiliated with the Colorado Spring Police Department. Staff members are advocates from the Center, DHS caseworkers, probation officers, a

deputy district attorney, and detectives from other local law enforcement agencies. By having these representatives under one roof, communication among agencies is enhanced, information is exchanged more readily, and learning among staff occurs more naturally.

Another example of shared responsibility among agencies is the in-kind contributions of those agencies to the program. While many of the positions are funded through grants, partner agencies provide staffing at no cost.

### **The DVERT Process and Operation**

The DVERT program focuses on three levels of domestic violence situations -- Level I -- the most lethal situations where a victim may be in serious danger; Level II -- moderately lethal situations where the victim is not in immediate danger; and Level III -- lower lethality situations where patrol officers engage in problem solving.<sup>4</sup>

A domestic violence situation comes to the attention of DVERT through a variety of mechanisms. Most of the referrals come from the Center. Other referrals will emanate from DHS, the Humane Society, other law enforcement agencies, or city service agencies. Once a case has been referred, all relevant information concerning criminal and prosecution histories, advocate, restraining orders, and human services documentation is researched by appropriate DVERT member agencies.

Referral decisions are made on a weekly basis. From May 1996 to December 1999, a DVERT "staffing unit" met to discuss individual domestic violence situations.

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<sup>3</sup> In October 2000, DVERT moved from a 3,400 square foot office to a 10,000 square foot building. This was made possible by the Department of Human Services, which provided the space to CSPD as part of its contribution.

<sup>4</sup> This categorization applies to DVERT cases from 1996 to 1999. In February 2000 DVERT made changes to its operation and no longer uses the Level I, II, or III designations. Instead, cases are now referred to as Assessment, Ongoing, or POP.

As mentioned above, a group of six to eight representatives from partner agencies would listen to a description of a domestic violence event or series of events relating to one couple. At the weekly staffing meeting an advocate, police officer, or caseworker for children would present the case. Documentation and evidence is presented, including criminal history, victim advocacy contacts, child protection contacts, humane society calls, calls for service, and other information. Discussion then occurs, followed by a vote of the panel to accept the case. To maintain adequate coverage of clients, Level I cases were limited to 125 at any given time.<sup>5</sup> Those cases that did not meet the Level I standards were placed in Level II or III, or simply not recommended for acceptance for any level.

For the most serious cases or Level I cases, several things happen next. First, the staffing unit makes recommendations regarding immediate interventions by the various DVERT member agencies. Second, the addresses and names of victims and perpetrators are added to the Department's computer-aided dispatch system. Third, clients may be added to the 'Wants and Warrants' computer system with an indicator identifying them with DVERT. Once the client is in DVERT, ongoing intervention tactics may also occur, including counseling, advocacy, shelter, support, and legal services. At least once a week, a DVERT victim advocate will attempt to contact the victim to provide support, information, and resources. In some cases, cellular phones may be assigned to victims requiring immediate access to law enforcement and/or micro-cassette telephone recorders to document telephone harassment and violations of restraining orders.

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<sup>5</sup> This was not always a rigid rule. If cases merited inclusion into DVERT Level 1, exceptions would be made to go beyond the 125 cases.

From its inception in May 1996 to December 31, 1999, DVERT accepted 421 Level I cases and 541 Level II cases. Table 1 shows the case numbers by year for each level. In addition, a small number of cases moved from Level II to Level I because of an increase in seriousness of the case.

**Table 1. DVERT Case Numbers by Year 1996-1999.**

*(Cases are analyzed by the year that they are accepted, not the year that they are deactivated.)*

Year	Level I	Level II	Level II Moved to Level I	Total (Level I plus Level II)
1996	82			82
1997	71	27		98
1998	115	192	8	307
1999	153	322	29	475
<b>Total</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>962</b>

**Table 2. Active and Deactivated DVERT Level I Cases, by year.**

Year	Level I cases as of December 31, 1999	
	Active	Deactivated
1996	6	76
1997	6	65
1998	12	103
1999	112	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>285</b>

Table 2 shows the number of cases that were deactivated or closed for each year as well as the status of active cases as of December 31, 1999.

Tables 3 and 4 show the demographic characteristics of Level I offenders and victims for 1998 and 1999. Offenders were predominantly white males between the age of 31 and 40. Victims were predominantly white females between the age of 21 and 40.

**Table 3. Level I Deactivated Cases Offender Demographics (N=285)**

**Sex of Offenders**

Year	Male	Female	Missing
1996	75	1	0
1997	65	0	0
1998	101	1	1
1999	40	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

**Race of Offenders**

Year	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Missing
1996	42	14	15	4	1
1997	37	10	10	1	7
1998	62	19	16	4	2
1999	23	12	4	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>

**Age of Offenders**

Year	15 and under	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Missing
1996	0	3	20	36	13	3	1
1997	0	3	12	34	12	2	2
1998	0	3	36	33	24	3	4
1999	1	0	11	17	10	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>

**Table 4. Level I Deactivated Cases Victim Demographics (N=303\*)**

**Sex of Victims**

Year	Male	Female	Missing
1996	2	80	0
1997	0	69	4
1998	2	104	1
1999	1	40	0
Total	5	294	5

**Race of Victims**

Year	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Missing
1996	55	5	12	1	9
1997	40	4	10	3	16
1998	62	12	11	6	16
1999	24	8	6	0	3
Total	181	29	39	10	44

**Age of Victims**

Year	15 and under	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Missing
1996	0	5	31	30	12	3	1
1997	0	5	21	28	12	0	7
1998	1	12	36	37	17	3	1
1999	0	4	14	14	8	0	1
Total	1	26	102	109	49	6	10

\*Some offenders have more than one victim.

Level I cases were brought to the attention of DVERT primarily through the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. Cases were referred for a number of reasons. Prior history of domestic violence by the perpetrator was indicated in 82 percent of the referrals (234 of 285). Physical abuse of the victim appeared in 78 percent of the referrals.

Prior arrests for domestic violence were also important as an indicator of potential harm. Most referral sheets had indications that the offender had been arrested before. In 74 percent (211 of 285) of the cases, a prior arrest had been recorded. Of the 197 cases



that indicated type of arrest, 176 were for domestic violence, nine were arrests for both domestic violence and child abuse and two were for child abuse only. In 10 cases, the prior arrest charges were for charges other than domestic violence and child abuse. Indications of when the incidents took place usually spanned one to three years, with 19 cases indicating periods of five years or greater. The largest reported period of abuse was 20 years.

Direct threats of violence by the offender to the victim were a fairly common notation on the referral sheet. Seventy-six percent (218 cases) of the victims had received a threat of violence. The most typical threat (70 percent or 153 of 218) was that the offender would kill the victim. The second most common threat was that the offender would harm the victim (in 24 cases) and that the offender would harm himself or herself. In 12 cases where the offender threatened to kill the victim, the offender also stated that he or she would commit suicide.

### **Original Reasons for Acceptance by DVERT**

DVERT accepted cases for a variety of reasons – in all we tabulated 19 possible reasons for accepting a referral.<sup>6</sup> These reasons are consistent with the notion that the primary concern was the safety of the victim. DVERT staff was concerned about the potential for lethality of the victim. The most frequent reason for acceptance was threats to the victim (76 percent), followed by evidence of multiple domestic violence incidents (66 percent of the cases). Reasons such as injuries, prior arrests of the offender, and

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<sup>6</sup> The options include: 1. multiple incidents of domestic violence; 2. injuries; 3. a prior offender arrest history; 4. children at risk; 5. general threats of violence; 6. specific threats to the victim; 7. threats to children; 8. threats to animals; 9. threats to others; 10. access to weapons; 11. evidence of stalking behaviors; 12. the lethality level was high; 13. a restraining order had been violated; 14. evidence of

physical abuse were indicated in over 70 percent of the cases. The least frequent reason for acceptance was elevation from Level II (2 percent of the cases) and recent losses in the victim's life (4 percent).

The total number of reasons for acceptance ranged from one to 13 reasons (of the 17 possible categories). The average number of reasons was 3.97, or nearly four reasons for accepting a case. For 1996, the average number of reasons for acceptance was 5.28; in 1997, the average number was 5.8; for 1998, the average was 2.87; and for 1999, the average number was 1.41 (it must be remembered that only 41 1999 cases have been deactivated at the time of the analysis). It is clear that in 1998 DVERT was selecting cases for more specific reasons than before. It appears that this change reflects the increased confidence of the staffing unit in selecting appropriate Level I cases. In other words, it appears that DVERT's early selections (in 1996 and 1997) were based on multiple reasons because they may have been reluctant to reject cases for fear of making an error. As they grew more proficient and confident about defining potentially lethal case, decisions were made based on fewer, but more serious criteria.

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physical abuse; 15. evidence of sexual abuse; 16. offender had a prior criminal history; 17. recent losses to the victim; 18. case was being elevated from Level II; and 19. other reasons

**Table 5. Reasons for Acceptance**

Reasons for Acceptance	1996 (N=76)	1997 (N=85)	1998 (N=107)	1999 (N=34)
Multiple Domestic Violence Incidents	80%	71%	21%	5%
Prior Arrests	65.8	61.5	22.3	2.4
Injuries	61.8	60	11.7	0
Threats to Victim	60.5	72.3	29.1	7.3
Threats of Violence	55.3	69.2	24.3	7.3
Risk to Children	35.5	36.9	38.8	29.3
Weapons Present	36.8	40	12.6	29.3
Stalking Behavior	28.9	40	18.4	19.5
Threats to Children	27.6	24.6	24.3	4.9
Violation of Restraining Order	24.3	24.6	5.8	0
Sexual Abuse	18.6	12.3	7.8	4.9
Recent Loss	10	1.5	0	4.9
Other Types of Threats other than to Victim, Children, Animal or General				
Threats of Violence	11.8	24.6	1.9	0
Threats to Animal	9.2	15.4	12.6	2.4
Lethality High	6.6	20	31.1	7.3
Prior Criminal History	0	3	22.3	17.1
Elevation from Level II	0	4.6	2.9	0

Examining the specific reasons by year, the pattern of reasons for acceptance differs in 1998 from the 1996 and 1997 cases.<sup>7</sup> In 1996, the reason for acceptance that occurred most frequently was reported multiple domestic violence incidents, followed by prior arrests and injuries. For 1997, the reason for acceptance that occurred most frequently was threats to victim, followed by multiple domestic violence incidents and threats of violence. In 1998, the most frequent reason for acceptance was risk to children, followed by lethality level high and threats to the victim. This appears to represent a policy shift towards a greater concern for children. As stated above, as DVERT expertise grew, this understanding of the significance of specific criteria to seriousness of the situation has become more refined.

<sup>7</sup> Cases from 1999 were not included in the analysis because of low numbers compared to other years and a number of missing cases.

**Deactivated cases.** Cases were closed or “deactivated” when DVERT staff believes that the client is safe from harm. From July 1, 1996 to December 31, 1999, DVERT closed 285 cases. Of those cases closed, 19 cases did not include reasons for deactivation.

From Table 6 it appears that DVERT staff became more efficient in dealing with cases. For cases opened in 1996, the average time to closure was 558 days; for 1997, 410 days; for 1998, closure occurred within 240 days, a decrease of 57 percent since 1996. While not conclusive at this point, since only 27 of the 41 cases closed in 1999 had both acceptance and deactivation dates, the average number of days between acceptance and closure was 166 days. We believe that this decline is attributable to increased confidence in DVERT decision-making in handling cases. In the early days of DVERT staff were more cautious about accepting cases and deactivating cases. As time past and their comfort levels increased, their expertise and efficiency in knowing when to deactivate cases appropriately increased as well.

**Table 6. Deactivated Cases**

	Number of Cases Deactivated	Average Number of Days between Referral and Deactivation	Minimum Number of Days; Maximum Number of Days
1996	76	558	139; 1,096
1997	62	410	30; 1,064
1998	101	240	35; 569
1999	27	166	60; 280

## **Analysis of Reasons for Deactivation**

In each case file, DVERT provides the reason or reasons for case deactivation.

Only two files were missing reasons for deactivation (N=209). For purposes of analysis, the 30-plus reasons for deactivation were compressed into 10 categories:

1. Offender or victim physically separated (e.g., offender is incarcerated, victim and/or offender moved out of the area; victim in jail);
2. Positive victim behavior (e.g., restraining order in effect, victim in a new relationship and/or counseling, victim divorcing/divorced offender);
3. Victim behavior is not conducive to DVERT program (e.g., victim cannot be reached, does not want any contact with DVERT, is unwilling or cooperative);
4. Victim is no longer afraid of the offender;
5. Positive offender behavior (e.g., no contact with victim, in treatment, completed domestic violence classes, served sentence and has not re-offended);
6. Negative offender behavior (awaiting trial, rearrested, rearrested on non-domestic violence charges);
7. DVERT involvement unnecessary (e.g., offender can be monitored by probation, the lethality level is low or is not a Level I case, third parties report no incidents, not in DVERT's jurisdiction);
8. Victim and offender behavior hard to quantify;
9. Offender behavior has changed (e.g., remarrying, in new relationship); and
10. Victim or offender is deceased.

Up to three different categories could be captured in the analysis. Physical separation of the victim and perpetrator and death of one of the parties were the most straightforward reasons for deactivation.

## **Main Reason for Deactivation of Cases**

Fifty-one percent of the cases (144 of 285) were deactivated mainly due to physical separation of the victim and offender. In five (2 percent) of the cases, either the victim or the offender was deceased. Of the physical separation cases, 33 percent were due to the victim and/or offender moving out of the area. Twenty percent (58 of 285) of the cases were deactivated because the offender was incarcerated (there was only one report of the victim being in jail).

In 60 cases (21 percent), the main reason for deactivation had to do with an offender *exhibiting positive behavior*. This is an important finding for it demonstrates a peaceful resolution to the domestic violence problem. No contact with the victim without any other positive behavior was indicated in 51 of the 60 cases. In seven cases, other positive behavior such as serving time and no reported re-offending was cited along with no contact. For the seven cases where the offender was still in contact with the offender, the offender was either in treatment, had completed a domestic violence program, or had served time and has had no reported incidents.

For 12 cases (6 percent), the main reason for deactivation was the victim did not want to partner with DVERT. The victim could not be reached, wanted no contact with DVERT, or indicated that s/he was unwilling or would not cooperate with DVERT.

**Intervention.** DVERT advocates and police maintain close contact with clients. In 1999, advocates made 1,549 successful contacts with 263 Level I clients. A team (an advocate and officer) made an additional 355 contacts. Other professionals affiliated with DVERT made 1,031 contacts. This is an average of 11.2 contacts per client over a one-year period. This equates to about 1 contact every five weeks for each client. Most

case files are filled with notes and descriptions of contacts attempted and made by DVERT advocates. In our interviews with 19 victims, they reported a range of contacts from 1 contact per month to nearly 300 contacts over 12 months. This disparity can be explained by the nature of the relationship between the victim and DVERT. A number of victims initiated contact with their advocates, while others remained passive and waited to hear from their advocates. Others did not return phone calls made by advocates or police officers and were difficult to find.

Some cases received more attention than others because of their complexities. As part of its routine, DVERT staff would conduct “Internal Case Management” meetings about twice a month, where complicated cases would be discussed, assignments delegated to staff, and action taken. For example in a case with a household of children, imminent threats by a perpetrator, and a victim who was reluctant to participate in DVERT, discussions would be held to determine what to do next. These case management meetings could lead to a caseworker from the Department of Human Services making a visit, a law enforcement officer acting on a Violation of a Restraining Order, and an advocate meeting with the victim.

**Role of advocates.** Advocates assisted victims in a number of ways. They referred clients and their children to group or individual counseling at the Center. They assisted them with day-to-day basic needs – finding housing, hooking up a telephone, calling the utility companies, getting welfare assistance, etc. They could provide cellular phones to victims who were being stalked so they could call 911 immediately. They were good “listeners” and counselors to victims who were facing the criminal justice

system for the first time. They joined the victim in court to provide moral support and perhaps to testify against the batterer.

**Criminal justice system.** Other interventions could occur through the enforcement of restraining orders or arrests for a variety of crimes, including assault, kidnapping, attempted murder, sexual assault, menacing, or stalking. In 1999, DVERT police officers made 47 felony arrests and 85 misdemeanor arrests. The District Attorney filed over 50 cases in 1999 resulting in five jury trials, 14 guilty verdicts (or plea bargains), and 7 not guilty counts. A number of cases are still pending.

## **Level II Cases**

When DVERT began in 1996, Level II cases were those situations where they did not warrant the same close scrutiny of Level I cases, but deemed serious enough to make contact by DVERT. Most of the cases were handled through phone calls to victims referred to DVERT. In 1997, DVERT developed the Level II referral form. This form compiled the information from calls to victims, along with any information gathered by participating DVERT agencies. Additionally, a short description of court information would be compiled. Once the victim had been called and all agencies had reported what they knew about the case, the DVERT staff would go through the referrals. Usually, the staff would review between five and eight cases a week. The cases that were not accepted were not documented.

While the actual process has not changed, the documentation and the level of detail on referral forms has increased over time, especially when the Level II staff detects that a Level II case may need to be moved up to Level I status. Since September 1999,



internal case reviews have been occurring for Level II cases. In early 2000, the number of cases became too much for Level II staff to deal with—the number of Level II referrals became 25 per week, so changes were made in the process.

From 1997 to 1999 there have been 541 Level II cases. In 1997, there were 26 cases; in 1998, 193 cases; and in 1999, 322 cases. Because data were more complete for 1998 and 1999 we analyze those cases only. Thus, the following analysis is based on a total of 515 cases.

Tables 7 and 8 show the demographic characteristics of offenders and victims for Level II cases in 1998 and 1999. As with Level I, most of the offenders were white males between the age of 21 and 50. For the victims, most were white females between the age of 16 and 50.

**Table 7. Level II Offender Characteristics (N=506)**

**Sex of Offenders**

Year	Male	Female	Missing
1998	179	7	7
1999	296	10	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>

**Race of Offenders**

Year	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Missing
1998	24	11	12	1	145
1999	90	46	20	5	152
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>297</b>

**Age of Offenders**

Year	15 and under	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60 and over	Missing
1998	1	14	63	68	27	6	1	13
1999	0	14	108	93	44	10	1	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>56</b>

**Table 8. Level II Victim Characteristics (N=506)**

**Sex of Victims**

Year	Male	Female	Missing
1998	12	178	3
1999	14	287	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>15</b>

**Race of Victims**

Year	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Missing
1998	31	4	7	3	148
1999	103	23	23	5	159
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>307</b>

**Age of Victims**

Year	15 and under	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60 and over	Missing
1998	0	20	61	61	22	3	2	24
1999	1	36	79	105	29	4	3	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>80</b>

## Reasons for Referral to DVERT Level II

This part of the analysis is based on 290 of 515 cases. Forty-four percent or 225 cases were missing information about the referral. Because of missing information, the results presented below may not be representative of all Level II cases or significant compared to other DVERT cases. They provide the reader with a snapshot of what is occurring in Level II cases.

Of the cases with referral information, 67 percent (195) indicated a prior history of domestic violence incidents. However, unlike Level I cases, the documented Level II cases were more likely to involve *emotional* instead of *physical* abuse. Fifty-six percent (110) involved emotional abuse and 44 percent involved physical abuse, of which 18 percent involved sexual abuse and 12 percent involved child abuse.

For 78 cases (or 27 percent), at least one domestic violence incident was recorded on the referral sheet; however, the exact number of incidents was not noted in many cases. The number of incidents ranged from one to 23, with one incident being reported the most often (in 25 cases).

Most referral sheets had indications that the offender had been arrested before. In 63 percent (183) of the cases, a prior arrest had been recorded. Of the prior arrests, 149 of them were for domestic violence or for domestic violence combined with additional charges unrelated to domestic violence or child abuse. For eleven cases, the arrests were for both domestic and child abuse and three were for child abuse only.

Direct threats of violence by the offender to the victim were noted routinely on the referral sheets, although not as common as seen with Level I cases. Forty-four percent (124 cases) of the victims had received a threat of violence. However, the level

of threat for Level II cases where information was documented followed the Level I pattern. That is, the most typical threat was that the offender would kill the victim -- this appears in 55 cases. The second most common threat was that the offender would harm the victim (in 30 cases) and the third most common threat was that the offender would harm himself or herself (in 20 cases).

### **Original Reasons for Level II Acceptance by DVERT**

Two hundred thirty-two of the 515 cases (or 45 percent) have documentation that give an explanation for acceptance of the case into Level II. In 1998, there are 65 cases and in 1999, 167 cases. For this reason, the results presented below cannot be viewed as representative of all Level II cases or significant compared to other DVERT cases.

Of the 183 cases with prior arrests, there were 121 cases that experienced injuries, with 102 cases with cuts, bruises or abrasions. Sixty-nine cases documented more serious injuries such as concussions, broken bones and sexual assault.

There were at least 92 incidents with substance abuse issues with the offender or the offender and victim.

With regard to seriousness of the issue, there were 24 cases that needed medical attention, of which at least nine were treated in hospitals or emergency rooms and two were treated in unspecified locations.

When examining the issue of access to weapons, in at least 67 of the 232 cases, perpetrators have access to weapons, with 35 cases having access specifically to guns.

Of other behaviors that would indicate a domestic violence behavior, 59 cases indicated harassment, 50 cases involved stalking, 49 indicated telephone threats, 41 said that the offender was following the victim, 35 documented threats against the victim, 8

indicated that the offender was peeping or driving by, there were 7 trespassing and 7 kidnapping/unlawful imprisonment incidents and 4 unexpected appearances by the offender.

### **Reasons for Closure of Level II Cases**

For 81 percent of the cases, there are conclusion forms that explain the reason for closing out the Level II case. Unfortunately, only 65 percent of the 1998 cases had conclusion forms while 90 percent of 1999 cases had forms. This may mean that the results presented below are more representative of 1999 cases than 1998 cases.

For 68 percent of the 1998 and 1999 cases that had conclusion forms, an advocate and officer made contact with a victim. For nearly 20 percent of the victims contacted (52 cases), the conclusion forms indicated that cases were referred to Level I. However, for 25 percent of these cases that were referred to Level I, it was difficult to verify whether referral actually occurred.

In the remaining 32 percent of cases (124) with conclusion forms DVERT staff gave reasons for not making contact with victims. For 104 cases, the victim could not be located at all. In 20 cases DVERT could document that the victim had moved and could not be found. In six of these cases DVERT had received information that the victim was now living outside DVERT's jurisdiction.

For those cases with conclusion forms, there were only five cases in which contact was made but the victim refused to talk with anyone from DVERT.

### **Level III or the POP Process in DVERT**

Problem oriented policing (POP) is a major strategy for the CSPD. This concept, first formulated in 1979 by Herman Goldstein, has been emphasized by Chief Kramer for the past decade. POP involves four basic steps: Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment. Scanning means identifying a specific problem that has occurred numerous times. Analysis involves extensive examination of the problem – who was the offender, victim, and stakeholders affected by the problem? Where is the problem located? When is it occurring? These are among many questions asked at this stage. Response is the phase where police and others take action. The Assessment phase takes a close look at the effectiveness of the problem solving strategy.

For the problem of domestic violence, the scanning phase of the POP process begins at DVERT. A staff member checks all relevant police department contact sheets to see if there have been three calls for service at a location during the last 12-month period. The DVERT staff member will pull the location history and calls for service for the identified location. The DVERT staff member also checks to see if the offender or victim is in the DVERT database, the DVERT POP database, or has been in the District Attorney's Fasttrack program. DVERT will provide victim packets back to the police department as POP projects.

At the CSPD division stations, lieutenants are informed about DVERT Level III POP projects. They in turn, make sergeants responsible for assigning the projects to officers for follow-up analysis, response and assessment. Patrol officers are responsible for contacting the victim at the identified location and delivering the victim packet. If the

victim no longer lives at the identified address, it is the responsibility of the officer to make all reasonable attempts to locate the victim within a 30-day period.

After either contacting the victim, or attempting to contact the victim, the officer will complete an "Officer Contact Sheet" with all pertinent information, which will be returned to their sergeant. The sergeant will pass the information on to the lieutenant. After review, the lieutenant will return the information to DVERT. At the present time, it does not appear that officers systematically treat Level III cases as POP projects. Some officers do engage in analysis, response and assessment for some of the problem addresses, but the model is not consistently followed.

Data from DVERT indicate that in 1999, 291 problem addresses were identified in the Colorado Springs area. Of these, 181 fell within the jurisdiction of CSPD. The rest were in the cities of Fountain, Manitou Springs, and Palmer Lake and in El Paso County. In the first quarter of 2000, 110 problem addresses were identified with 68 in CSPD's jurisdiction.

## **DVERT and Community Policing**

DVERT epitomizes community policing in Colorado Springs in a number of ways. First, DVERT has formed strong partnerships with over 25 community-based organizations, city and county service agencies, and other law enforcement departments. The partnerships are based on memoranda of understanding that lay out specific roles for each agency. Each organization participates in domestic violence reduction efforts. Advocates from the Center, guardians ad litem from the court, probation officers,

caseworkers for children, animal control officers from the Humane Society, deputy district attorneys, patrol officers, and local physicians work together to assist victims.

Second, DVERT has brought about organizational changes within the police department and its partners. Within CSPD, knowledge about domestic violence has increased through training and active participation by patrol officers. For the last four years, officers have rotated through DVERT for 100 days to learn about domestic violence and assist in responding to calls after hours. Further, officers work directly with the partner agencies and thus learn about the roles of advocates, children's caseworkers, and other members of DVERT. Similarly, non-police members of DVERT learn from each other and about law enforcement. Thus, the victim is aided and organizational bonds are forged.

All of this would not be possible without the support of Chief Kramer. The chief's open management style encourages officers to think, solve problems, and handle situations without fear of failure or recriminations for failing. By delegating authority to all commanders, supervisors, officers, and civilians, he is able to develop leaders and run an efficient, highly motivated, results-oriented agency. This attitude extends to DVERT. Detective Black is able to supervise a unit of non-CSPD staff and make decisions about important domestic violence cases with confidence and support from the chief. In addition, without the chief's influence, DVERT's partnerships would not be as formidable.

Third, DVERT specifically follows the POP model for Level III cases. As discussed above, problem solving begins at DVERT for addresses with three or more



calls for service over a one-year period. This component could be strengthened through more active participation by officers at the district stations.

Overall, DVERT and community policing principles are intertwined. Slowly, subtly, and without much fanfare DVERT is becoming institutionalized not only within the police department, but also within the city of Colorado Springs.

### **Perceptions and Attitudes of DVERT Staff**

To assist us in understanding the implementation and impact of DVERT, we interviewed a number of current and former DVERT staff. This section describes the results of those interviews.

#### **Impact of DVERT**

Interviewees described several major accomplishments of their affiliated agencies as a result of DVERT. Respondents from victim services focused on three major categories: services for victims, inter-agency relationships, and organizational accomplishments. Law-enforcement personnel emphasized increased awareness, education, and training; networking; and systems communication among major accomplishments. Interviewees from DHS indicated that the linkage between domestic violence and child welfare is a major accomplishment, as are organizational changes associated with DVERT. Those affiliated with the District Attorney's office identified tougher plea-bargaining, education, effective prosecution, and resource availability.

**Services to women.** The vast majority of persons interviewed believe that services to women have improved as a result of DVERT. They cite improvement through agency collaboration, training, the women themselves, and new programs and

initiatives. Of these categories, interviewees focused on the women themselves more than any other area. They described cell phones, safe housing, and counseling as some of the ways in which services have improved. Challenges to serving victims include feelings of being overwhelmed by the task at hand or personnel issues, such as low pay for victims' advocates.

Barriers to improving services were identified by about one-third of interviewees. They include housing needs, limited resources, and potential for the process to re-victimize some women.

**Changes in law enforcement.** Most respondents felt that practices in law enforcement have changed as a result of DVERT. Categories of change encompass education and training, organizational changes, inter-agency relationships, direct services and resources. One major change is Fast Track, a new program designed by the district attorney that expedites domestic violence cases that come to the attention of the criminal justice system.

The value of law enforcement rotations at DVERT has a ripple effect on changing law enforcement. Not only do rotations dramatically change the perspective and knowledge of officers directly involved in a rotation, but also the experiences of rotating officers filter back to home departments when rotations have ended. Other examples of changes in law enforcement include better understanding and enforcement of the law with mandatory arrest (along with relevant issues, such as stalking, dual arrests, and primary aggressors), needs in rural areas, and sensitivity to the subject of domestic violence.

A few interviewees described challenges to change within law enforcement with focused on the slowness of institutional change compared to individual change.

**Violence Reduction.** The most prominent message conveyed by DVERT staff is that violence is reduced for women when they become a part of the DVERT caseload and are being served and supported by DVERT staff. Further, when perpetrators are in the DVERT caseload, and are being monitored by DVERT staff, recidivism for those perpetrators – as one means of measuring reduction of violence – is lowered or non-existent.

Interviewees also said that violence has been reduced for children as a result of DVERT. In particular, children are safer when their mothers are actively involved within DVERT's caseload due to a number of variables, such as increased vigilance of those children, and programs and resources for those children.

Respondents are realistic in identifying challenges to reducing violence. Almost half of them suggest that some educational pieces are missing (school programming for adolescents, for example); DVERT's limitations on impact reduction; the nature of the community with its transient population and value system poses challenges; and that there are questions about identifying persons appropriate for intervention.

## **On Collaboration**

**Role differentiation.** Interviewees described three levels of collaborations among partners: 1) those among core partner-agency staff housed at DVERT; 2) those among staff of partner agencies who are split in their physical location (at DVERT and partner agency offices); and 3) those among partner agencies at large. Across the board,

the majority of interviewees feel strongly that role differentiation is generally clear. At the same time, the majority also believes that there are conflicts associated with role differentiation. Conflicts stem from a variety of sources, which include intermittent misunderstanding about differentiating roles; sharing common goals with different agency policies to achieve those goals; lack of knowledge about partner agencies' policies/regulations and constraints; and conflicts over information sharing.

**Conflict.** The majority of interviewees believe that there are also conflicts outside of role differentiation. However, many respondents emphasize the positive aspects of conflict as well. One person interjected that conflict "speaks for the process" of inter-agency collaboration; another suggested that conflict translates into "healthy debates". Areas of conflict extend to turf and jurisdiction; definitional issues; decision-making; power/control within DVERT, establishment of in-house disciplinary policies; and some levels of distrust.

## **Suggestions for Improving DVERT**

Four categories for improving DVERT emerged from the interviews: policies and decision making; services for victims; resources and manpower training; and physical environment. They proposed over 50 suggestions.

**Policies and decision-making.** Almost 40% of all suggestions fell within this category. Interviewees proposed improvements in management and leadership, gave suggestions for current and future directions, voiced opinions about organizational, day-to-day issues, and addressed personnel matters. With regard to management, proposals

vary from less "micro-management" and fewer supervisors to more "free-flow interaction among staff at the lower street level, where people are most knowledgeable."

More far-reaching ideas range from extending policy making beyond core membership and ways to perpetuate the ideas of DVERT to limiting DVERT cases to Level I's only. Organizationally, interviewees express desire for meetings which function more as brainstorming or input sessions rather than as status-report forums.

**Services for victims.** About 25% of the suggestions are directly linked to victim services. These vary from improving response time, linking services to welfare benefits, developing ways for victims to become more empowered and self-sufficient, establishing more follow-up and long-term care after emergencies, and developing more programs for children.

**Resources and manpower.** Another 25% of recommendations call for more resources and staff generally, equalizing financial commitments among partners, and obtaining support from city and county governments.

**Training.** Ten percent of all suggestions focus on continuing on-going training, expanding training nationally, and developing more specialized and advanced training where appropriate.

**Physical environment.** A few other suggestions propose more physical space generally and more private space in particular--especially related to phone use.

## Victim Interviews

In April 2000 we conducted interviews with 19 DVERT clients.<sup>8</sup> We asked a number of questions about their experiences with DVERT, law enforcement, victim service agencies, and the criminal justice process as well as specific questions about their particular situations.

Eighteen women and one man were interviewed by staff of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Solutions. On average, these clients spent over one year in the DVERT program. Six clients were still part of DVERT; 13 had been “deactivated.” During their time in DVERT, clients reported that they were in contact with an advocate or law enforcement officer on a regular basis. For five individuals this meant contact twice a week. For five other individuals it meant weekly contact. Only two clients said that contact was “not often.” We also asked victims about the number of contacts they actually had with DVERT. One individual who was in the program for about a year said that he/she had almost 300 contacts with an advocate. This number was an exception as the average for the rest of the respondents was about 36 contacts per client with an advocate.

Most respondents had a very high regard for DVERT and its staff. Seventeen of 19 clients strongly agreed or agreed that a DVERT advocate was available to the victim whenever she was needed. The same number strongly agreed or agreed that DVERT staff provided support to the victim. Fourteen strongly agreed or agreed that DVERT

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<sup>8</sup> These individuals were selected by DVERT staff members based on availability. It is not representative sample of all clients, but the information provides us with insights about their views of DVERT and domestic violence.

police officers understood their problems and concerns. Sixteen respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the DVERT program “made me feel safe.”

We asked open-ended questions at the conclusion of the interview. When asked to “tell us about your experiences in DVERT” more than half (10) had high praise for DVERT. One victim said that DVERT “saved my life.” Another said that: “DVERT is a great program...without the advocate, I would not have gotten a restraining order ... having an advocate in court was very valuable ... otherwise wouldn't have followed through on charges ... I would probably be 6 feet under right now...” Finally, one respondent said, “I really thank God for DVERT, they pulled me through...I’m much more stable now... DVERT helped me get help for my alcoholism and I have not drunk for a year.”

Victims also were asked a series of questions about domestic violence as it affected them. Fifteen victims did not stay with their partner when they were in the DVERT program. Thirteen said that there were times when they wanted to call the police because you were afraid of possible violence. Of these, nine victims said they called the police; the other four said they wanted to but did not. For the nine who called the police, three victims called the police on three separate occasions, three others called the police four times, two said they called five times, and one called the police about 20 times.

## Section 4: Concluding Remarks

DVERT constantly evolves. Over the 18-month period that we observed DVERT, changes occurred regularly in its processes, decision-making, and personnel. This is due in part, to the "newness" of the unit. More importantly, however, changes occur because of the belief in fixing and improving systems if they could serve clients/victims better.

In February 2000, DVERT made major changes in the way that it classifies cases. Levels I through III were replaced with new terminology and a new process. The "Intake Team" is now responsible for reviewing all cases referred to DVERT. This team, comprised of detectives, victim advocates and child protection workers must make contact with the victim and children on every referral. Extensive background information continues to be gathered including criminal history, victim advocacy contacts, child protection contacts, and other information. The Intake Team has two weeks from the date of the case assignment to make contact with the victim and to provide her/him with resource information and information about domestic violence and safety planning. The victim may also talk to a detective about previous domestic violence incidents. Also, a child protection worker assesses the welfare of children in the home, particularly for those children over the age of 5. After the Intake Team completes its initial visit to see the victim and children, the team members will either make a recommendation, in conjunction with DVERT management for further intervention or may choose to close the case with no further follow-up. If the Intake Team believes that the family could benefit from additional intervention, team members may refer the case to the DVERT Enhanced Intervention Team made up of an Assessment Team and an Ongoing Team.



The DVERT Assessment Team looks at cases that are brought in as a result of “call outs” on non-DVERT cases. That is, when the police respond to a call for service and need the assistance of DVERT, the Assessment team is available for consultation and on-site response. The Assessment Team provides short-term interventions in complex cases. The team works on 25-30 cases at any given time. Interventions are tailored to the needs of each family and may include advocacy support for the victim, containment of the offender through arrest, or assistance for children. They may also develop stalking cases and could facilitate the relocation of victims who are in very dangerous situations. Most interventions by the Assessment Team should be completed within two to eight weeks. This team also makes recommendations for further involvement by DVERT or may choose to close the case.

The DVERT Ongoing Team handles the most dangerous cases, much like those in Level I. The multi-disciplinary DVERT staffing unit must vote to bring cases to the Ongoing Team. As with Level I, the number of cases is capped -- but this time at 75, rather than 125.

Once a case is assigned to the Ongoing Team, it is monitored closely. An advocate is assigned to contact the victim on a regular basis to provide support and information. Court support may also be provided. Just as in Level I, multi-disciplinary case management occurs here. Child protection workers, the humane society, police detectives, counselors, and others are involved in the case.

DVERT continues to target addresses with multiple calls for service for domestic violence. These fall within the problem-oriented policing or POP module of DVERT. In 2000 CSPD officers delivered 350 packets to victims of domestic violence. According to

statistics compiled by DVERT staff, patrol officers logged 57 hours of time in contacting about 70 percent of the victims. POP packets were mailed to those victims who could not be contacted personally.

With these changes, DVERT hopes to handle more cases than before and still manage the most lethal situations. The emphasis remains on the safety of the victim.

Additional grant funds have led to other changes. In FY 2000, the COPS Office provided monies for innovative, multimedia training to all professionals interested in reducing domestic violence. A training curriculum is being developed that includes scenario-based exercises, adult learning techniques, and interactive CD-ROMS. Travel funds are available for DVERT team members to assist other cities and agencies in developing multi-disciplinary responses to domestic violence. Finally, DVERT has been named a National Demonstration Site by VAWA and a National Training Test Site by the COPS Office. These changes will bring more attention to DVERT and assist other agencies as well.

## Section 5: Key Findings of the Evaluation

Overall, this evaluation identified 16 significant findings that should be beneficial to practitioners and others interested in reducing domestic violence. In summary, these findings are:

### *The Philosophy and Characteristics of DVERT*

1. DVERT focuses on the *safety of victims* as its primary concern. This principle guides the multi-disciplinary team in dealing with the criminal justice and social service systems. By placing the safety of victims at the forefront, and by asking themselves “how does this action affect the victim?” members of DVERT staff are confident in their abilities to deal with difficult situations.
2. DVERT does not follow the traditional model of domestic violence special units in police departments. It is a multi-disciplinary response to the problem of domestic violence incorporating criminal justice and social service agencies.
3. DVERT takes a more balanced approach to the problems of domestic violence as it spreads responsibility for the problem to a number of agencies, not just the police.

### *DVERT Activities and Results*

4. DVERT has handled nearly 1000 of the most serious domestic violence cases (Level I and II) in the Colorado Springs area over the last four years.
5. Characteristics of offenders/perpetrators in the DVERT caseload were predominantly white males between the ages of 31 and 40.
6. Victims in the DVERT caseload were predominantly white females between the ages of 21 and 40.
7. Level I cases were brought to the attention of DVERT primarily through the Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and not through the “normal” channels of arrests or calls for services.
8. For cases opened in 1996 the average time to closure was 530 days; for cases opened in 1998 closures occurred within 210 days, a decrease of 60%.
9. “Risk to children” was the most frequent reason for acceptance into the DVERT caseload in 1998, representing a philosophical shift towards greater concern for children.

10. As DVERT expertise has grown, staff has refined the criteria used for accepting cases.

### ***Impact of DVERT on victims***

11. Victims have more resources through DVERT. Safe housing, counseling, and explanations of the criminal justice process are among the resources available to victims.
12. Of 19 victims who were interviewed, two said that DVERT had saved their lives. Others said that DVERT changed their lives for the better.
13. For women and children actively involved in the DVERT program, it appears that violence has been reduced.
14. Law enforcement practices have changed as a result of DVERT. Police officers are more aware of domestic violence issues in Colorado Springs; they receive more training in domestic violence (on stalking, dual arrests, and primary aggressor); and they have engaged in more problem solving than in the past.

### ***Impact on Services***

15. Services to victims have improved as a result of DVERT. Because of the collaboration among police and social service agencies, the most serious domestic violence cases are now being addressed. Advocates, police, caseworkers for children, the district attorney, and other agencies work together to ensure the safety of victims.
16. Overall, through this program CSPD has expanded its domestic violence operation with one detective and rotating patrol officers paid through overtime to a fully functional multi-disciplinary organization. It has saved lives, reduced violence, improved communication among city and county agencies and service providers, and improved the quality of life in Colorado Springs.

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## **Appendix 1: DVERT Information and Forms**





**PARTICIPATING AGENCIES FOR  
DVERT  
(DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ENHANCED RESPONSE TEAM)**

- ✓ Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- ✓ Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence (CPDV)
- ✓ Children's Advocacy Center
- ✓ City of Fountain Police Department
- ✓ City of Green Mountain Falls Marshal's Office
- ✓ City of Manitou Springs Police Department
- ✓ City of Palmer Lake Marshal's Office
- ✓ Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD)
- ✓ Colorado University at Colorado Springs (CUCS)
- ✓ El Paso County Department of Human Services (EPCHS)
- ✓ El Paso County Humane Society (HSPPR)
- ✓ El Paso County Sheriff's Office (EPCSO)
- ✓ Fourth Judicial District Attorney's Office
- ✓ Fourth Judicial District Probation Department
- ✓ Law Enforcement Chaplains
- ✓ Pikes Peak Arkansas River Legal Aid
- ✓ Senior Victims Assistance Team (SVAT)
- ✓ Teller County Sheriff's Office
- ✓ Town of Calhan Marshal's Office
- ✓ Town of Monument Police Department
- ✓ United States Air Force (OSI)
  - ✓ Academy
  - ✓ Falcon Air Force Base
  - ✓ Peterson Air Force Base
  - ✓ Space Command
- ✓ United States Army (CID)
  - ✓ Fort Carson
- ✓ Woodland Park Police Department

# DVERT Staffing Recommendations

- Active
- Inactive

DVERT Case Number:
Date:

**Law Enforcement**


**DA's Office**


**CPDV**


**EPCHS**


**Other**


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**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**  
Enhanced Response Team

**DVERT Referral Form**

DVERT Case Number:

**Offender**

Name:

Date of Birth:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Phone: (h) (w)

Race:

Relationship:

Names & ages of children:

**Referring Person**

Name:

Agency:

Phone:

Date:

**Victim**

Name:

Date of Birth:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Phone: (h) (w)

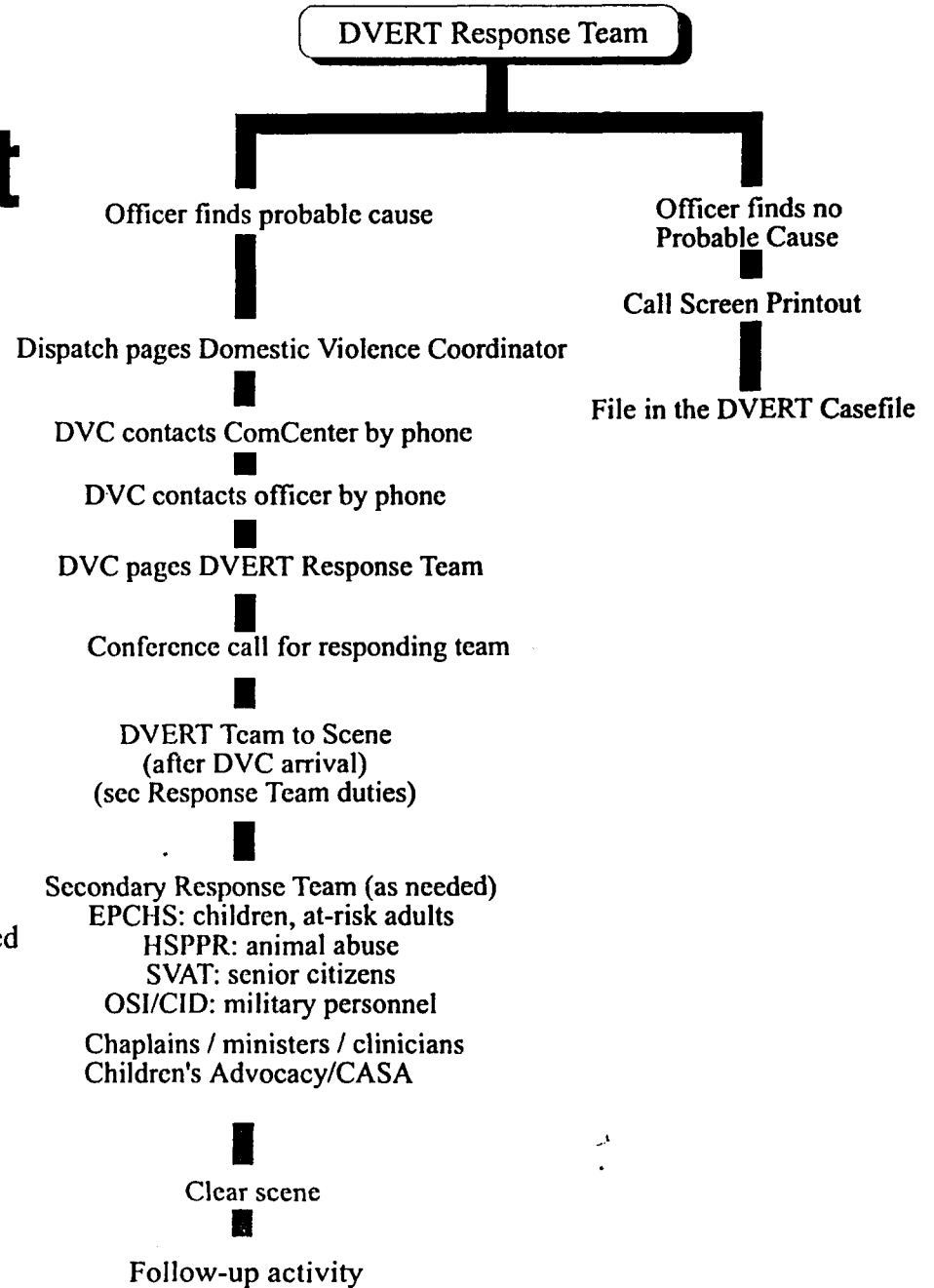
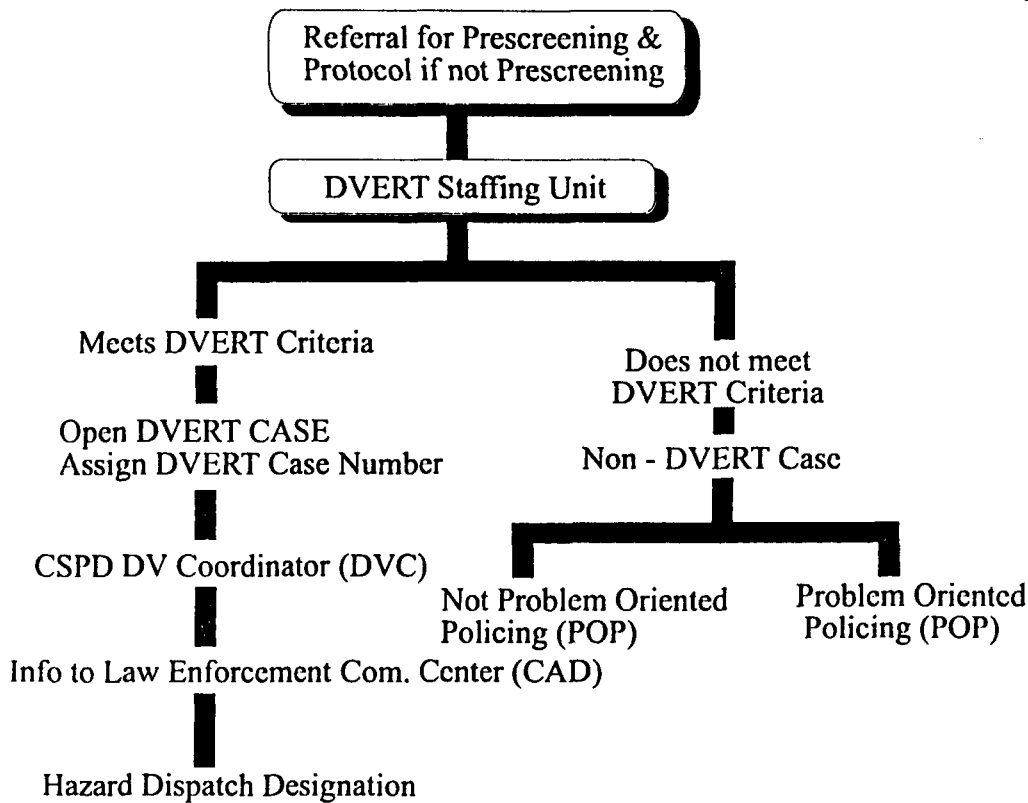
Race:

Relationship:

*Check and describe all that apply:*

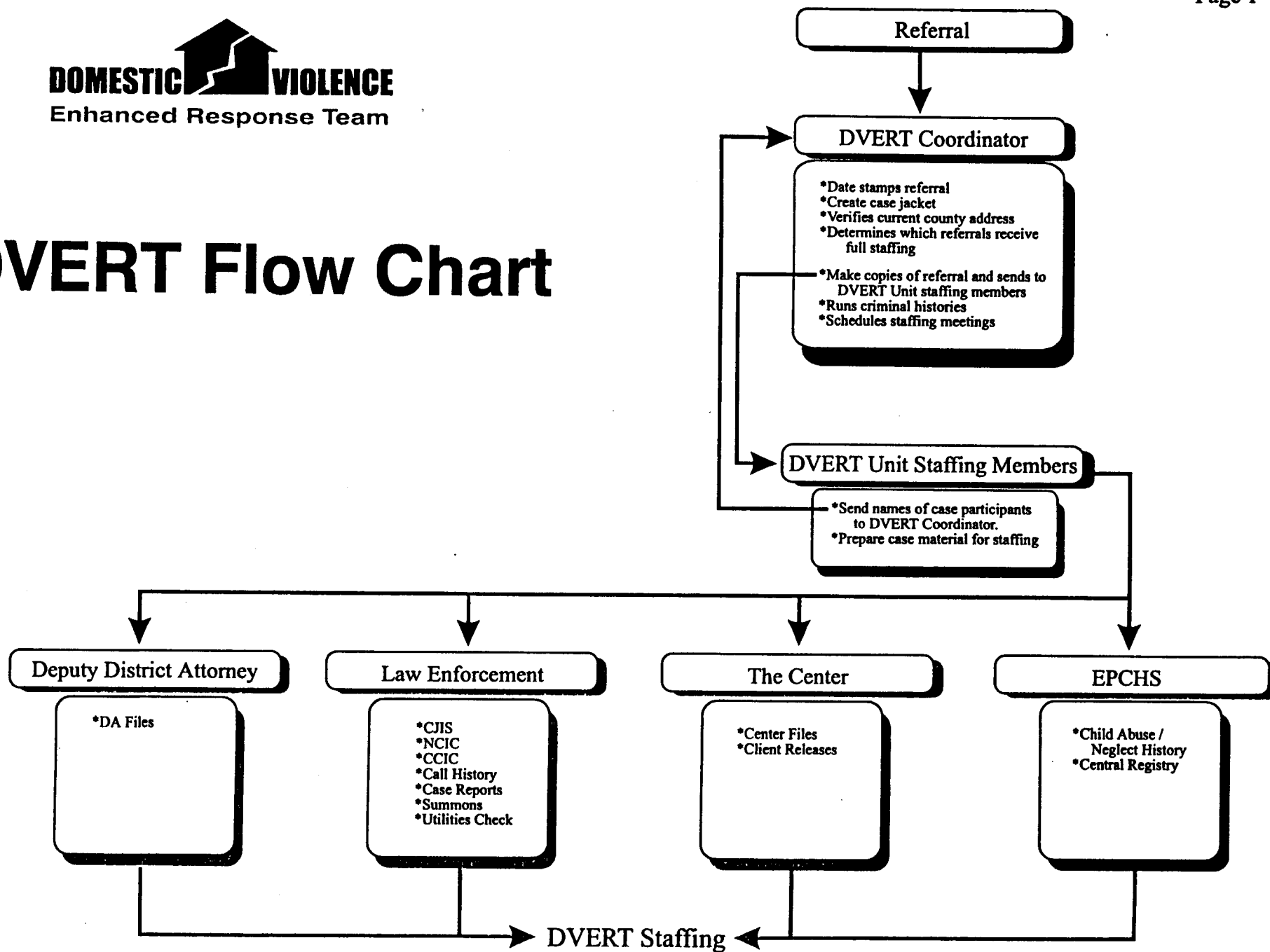
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. History of D.V. incidents:	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Type of injury:
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Multiple law enforcement interventions:	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Stalking behavior:
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Direct threats of violence:	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Refusal of victim to go to a safe place:
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Separation attempted, in progress, or family not together:	<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Abuse of others (children, elders, pets):
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Recent losses (job, family, death, etc.):	<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Access to weapons:

# DVERT Flow Chart





# DVERT Flow Chart



**DVERT Team  
Duties at the Crime Scene**

**CSPD Domestic Violence Coordinator**

- Videotape scene including interviews
- Photograph injuries to victim
- Review and collect physical evidence
- Neighborhood witness follow up
- Family member witness follow up
- Capture and duplicate 911 tape
- Contact secondary response (as needed)

**Deputy District Attorney**

- Assist with interview of victim and witnesses
- Provide advice on legal issues
- Advise in evidence collection
- Provide prosecution perspective at scene
- Assist with paperwork
- Request increased bond from on call judge

**CPDV Victim Advocate**

Provide support and information to victim:

- explain resources available to victim and children
- explain legal/criminal process
- explain restraining order process
- provide Victim Information Packet
- arrange transportation to Safehouse (if necessary)

An individual advocate will be assigned to each victim for all active DVERT cases.

**DVERT Team  
Follow-up Task List**

- DVERT Detective
- DVERT Advocate

Initial victim follow-up within 24 hours of incident

- DVERT Detective
- DVERT Advocate

Revisit victim 3-5 days after incident to photograph visible injuries.

- DVERT Detective
- DVERT Advocate

Follow-up interview with victim for additional information (i.e., about the incident, additional witnesses, prior similar acts by the defendant, subsequent threats or intimidation by the defendant), referrals (e.g., housing, legal services, counseling, etc.), and case supplements for law enforcement.

- DVERT Detective
- Advocate  
Coordinator

When appropriate, contact school's district official to advise of DVERT intervention.

- CPDV Coordinator
- DVERT Deputy  
DA
- EPCHS
- HSPPR
- OSI/CID

Case preparation (i.e., interview victim, witnesses, responding members of DVERT team; review all physical evidence, review all photographs and enlarge for prosecution; file Motion for Similar Acts, file Motion in Limine re: excited utterance, prepare charts of crime scene and physical injuries, etc.).

- CPDV Coordinator
- DVERT Advocate
- DVERT Deputy  
DA
- EPCHS
- HSPPR
- OSI/CID

Ongoing follow-up documentation as directed by DVERT Program Coordinator or designee, per staffing recommendations and protocol.

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## **Appendix 2: Interview Protocols**



**Interview Protocol  
DVERT Participants**

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interview participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your current job responsibilities:

**History of involvement in DVERT**

I would like you to think about the origins of the DVERT program. (The following questions are aimed at the early history of the program.)

When did you first hear about DVERT?

From whom?

How did you/ your agency become involved in DVERT?

What is the role of your agency in DVERT?

From your perspective, what are the objectives of DVERT?

In your opinion what have been the major accomplishments of your agency as a result of DVERT?

**Improving services for women victims**

From your perspective, have services to women been improved as a result of DVERT?

If so, how? Give specific examples.

If not, what seems to have been the challenges?

**Changes in Law Enforcement practices**

From your perspective have practices in law enforcement (police) changed as a result of DVERT?

If so, how? Give specific examples.

If not, what seems to have been the challenges?

**Has violence against women been reduced?**

From your perspective, has violence against women been reduced as a result of DVERT?

If so, how? Give specific examples.

If not, what has worked against this reduction?

From your perspective, has DVERT made an impact on serving women victims in any way that hasn't been mentioned?

If so how, specifically?

### **Children**

From your perspective, has violence against children been reduced as a result of DVERT?

If so, how? Give specific examples.

### **Collaborations**

Let's talk about the different groups involved in DVERT. How many agencies are involved?

Are the roles of the agencies differentiated? Are there conflicts over roles?

Are there conflicts among the agencies?

Are decisions made easily? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being easy and 1 being difficult what would be the score?

How often does your agency meet with the others? Weekly? Monthly?

Do the other agencies actively participate in the discussions?

**DVERT Participants**

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Time start: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Time end: \_\_\_\_\_

When did you first become a DVERT client? \_\_\_/\_\_\_ (month/year) \_\_\_ not sure

Are you still a DVERT client? \_\_ yes \_\_ no

If no, when was your case "de-activated?" \_\_\_/\_\_\_ (month/year)

During the time you were (are) a DVERT client, on average, how often were you (or are currently) in contact with a DVERT advocate?

- 1. Daily
- 2. Twice a week
- 3. Weekly
- 4. Two times a month
- 5. Monthly
- 6. Other \_\_\_\_\_

How many times have you had contact with a DVERT Advocate? \_\_\_\_\_

How many times have you had contact with a DVERT police officer? \_\_\_\_\_

This section asks about your perceptions of the DVERT program.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree	0 Neutra
1. The DVERT advocate was available to me whenever I needed her.					
2. DVERT staff provided me with support.					
3. DVERT law enforcement officers understood my problems and concerns					
4. DVERT services were extremely helpful to me overall.					
5. The DVERT program made me feel safe.					

Each of the following questions should be prefaced with: "During the time that you were in the program..."

Did you stay with your partner? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

Were there times when you wanted to call the police because you were afraid of possible violence against yourself? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

→ If so, did you call the police or decide not to call the police?  
\_\_\_ called \_\_\_ decided not to call

→ → (If called): About how many times were you afraid and called the police? \_\_\_ times \_\_\_ not sure

→ → (If decided not to call): About how many times were you afraid but decided not to call the police? \_\_\_ times \_\_\_ not sure

→ Did you call your DVERT advocate? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

Were your children ever present during an incident of domestic violence in your household? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ I do not have children.

→ Did you report this incident to the police? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

→ Did you report this incident to your DVERT advocate? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

### Criminal Justice System issues

During the time that you were in the program, was your partner ever arrested for a domestic violence violation (restraining order, harassment, stalking, assault, etc.)?  
\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

→ How many times did this happen? \_\_\_ times \_\_\_ not sure

Think about the most recent experience. At the time you made a police report, how did the officer(s) treat you? Would you say they were:

\_\_\_ very helpful \_\_\_ helpful \_\_\_ not helpful?

→ Was the police officer involved with the arrest a DVERT officer?

\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ not sure

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Was your case forwarded to the district attorney?  yes  no  not sure

→If so, How were you treated? Were they:

very helpful  helpful  not helpful?

Did your case go to trial?  yes  no

What was the outcome of the case? (check all that apply)

jail  probation  prison sentence  
 some combination → describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
 other → describe: \_\_\_\_\_

### Counseling/Other agency involvement

What other agencies provided services to you (as part of DVERT) (circle all that apply)

1. The Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence
2. DHS/CPS
3. CASA
4. Humane Society
5. Other → describe: \_\_\_\_\_

How were you treated by the people in those agencies? Were they very helpful, helpful, not helpful?

\_\_\_\_\_ (write agency listed above):  very helpful  helpful  not helpful  
\_\_\_\_\_ (write agency listed above):  very helpful  helpful  not helpful  
\_\_\_\_\_ (write agency listed above):  very helpful  helpful  not helpful  
\_\_\_\_\_ (write agency listed above):  very helpful  helpful  not helpful  
\_\_\_\_\_ (write agency listed above):  very helpful  helpful  not helpful

Have you received group/individual counseling?  yes  no

→If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

Has your partner received group/individual counseling?  yes  no

→If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

Have your children received group/individual counseling  yes  no

→If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

→ If you are still with your partner, has your relationship changed? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

→ How has it changed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you could change the current system for dealing with domestic violence, what is the one thing you would most like to see change?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What would help you the most?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you were giving this survey, what questions would you like to see included that we have not asked you?

\_\_\_\_\_

What would be your answer to this question?

\_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experiences with DVERT or anything else?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Victim Responses

21<sup>st</sup> Century Solutions' staff interviewed 19 DVERT clients in April 2000. A 30-item questionnaire was used to determine victim perceptions of DVERT and domestic violence. Victims were asked to sign a consent form indicating their voluntary participation and the confidential nature of the interviews. Eighteen of the 19 interviewees were compensated \$20 for their time. Interviews took place at the DVERT offices over a two-day period.

These are the results of those interviews.

### Victims:

19 clients interviewed; 18 women, 1 man

Time in DVERT: as low as 1 month to 28 months; average of 12 months

Average contact with DVERT -- 2 "not often"; 5 twice a week; 5 weekly; 5 twice a month; 2 monthly

Number of contacts by advocate: range of 1 to 300; one person said 300 contacts; if these are averaged 50 contacts per client; if this one is removed, then about 36 contacts per client.

Number of contacts by police: 131 total contacts or about 7 per client.

### Perceptions of DVERT program:

The DVERT advocate was available to me whenever I needed her -- 8 strongly agree; 9 agree; 1 disagree; 1 no opinion

DVERT staff provided me with support -- 8 strongly agree; 9 agree; 1 disagree; 1 strongly disagree

DVERT law enforcement officers understood my problems and concerns -- 12 strongly agree; 2 agree; 3 strongly disagree; 2 no opinion

The DVERT Program made me feel safe -- 10 strongly agree; 6 agree; 1 disagree; 1 strongly disagree; 1 no opinion

### On domestic violence:

During the time that you were in the program...

Did you stay with your partner? 4 Yes 15 No

Were there times when you wanted to call the police because you were afraid of possible violence against yourself? 13 Yes 6 No



If so, did you call the police or decide not to call the police?

9 called the police; 4 wanted to, but didn't

How many times did you call? From 3 calls to 20 calls [3 said 3 times; 3 said 4 times; 2 said 5 times; 1 said 20]

Did you call the DVERT Advocate? 11 called; 2 did not call

Were your children ever present during an incident of dv in your household? 10 yes  
6 No 3 no children

Did you report this incident to the police? 6 yes 4 no

Did you report this incident to your DVERT advocate? 8 yes 2 no

### **Criminal Justice System Issues**

During the time that you were in the program, was your partner ever arrested for a domestic violence violation?

13 Yes 6 No, of these 2 reported to the police, but an arrest was not made.

So 15 called the police -- 13 arrests; 2 no arrests, but a report was filed

How many times did this happen? Range from 1 to 10 times

Treatment by police 13 very helpful/helpful; 2 not helpful

6 were DVERT cops; 7 were not; 2 did not know

Was the case forwarded to the DA? 13 Yes 2 No

Treatment by DA: 10 helpful/very helpful 3 not helpful

Case go to trial? 5 yes 7 no (5 plea bargains)

What other agencies provided services to you:

CPDV 16

DHS 8

CASA 9

HS 0

Other 10

Victim in counseling during the time in DVERT? 15 yes 4 no

Perp in counseling during the time in DVERT? 10 yes 7 no 2 DK

Children in counseling during the time in DVERT? 11 yes 7 no 2 no children

## **Comments:**

### **What would you change?**

1. They have been good to me, but I would change this ...if my advocate is not in the office, another advocate should be able to help me. Sharing of cases, so if they are not in I can still be helped and understood.
2. Legal assistance for victim's throughout the whole process; no one is looking for the rights of victims
3. Would like to see another level in DVERT -- a maintenance level after we are released from Level 1. (felt abandoned)
4. Have more advocates to give more attention to each victim.
5. Stiffer laws and penalties (4 people)
6. Financial assistance (3 people)
7. More thorough investigations
8. DVERT needed to show up when the incident occurred, not 4 months later
9. DVERT interviewed my son and took him away -- parental rights lost
10. DHS should change -- threatened me about my child's safety
11. Put the offender in jail and keep him there; offender has too much freedom to harass her because of the judge's decision.
12. DVERT is good, but they really can't do anything to stop the offender until he violates the law. Their hands are tied. What more can be done physically to protect the victim? (3 people said a version of this)
13. Discouraged when I went to court -- the judge didn't understand; treated her as if she did something wrong.
14. Need speedy trial and judges who are more aware of DV issues; judges don't seem to understand the harm that could be caused by such a simple thing as a violation
15. Expedite the process; dragged on for so long; have people informed
16. DHS and GAL worked against me; made false accusations about me, took my child and place her with the offender who sexually abused her (and now facing charges)
17. Stronger ability to separate abuser from victim
18. Women need more one-on-one support; more personnel needed to work with the legal system; need to be able to get help, but then left alone
19. Not enough protection for women in DV; never really felt safe until friends told the offender to stay away; not enough laws to scare him off
20. Officers need to take things more seriously, need to be educated and understand the situation;

### **Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experiences in DVERT?**

1. DA never tells me anything...everything is through my advocate.. jail doesn't tell me when the offender is bailed out
2. The program makes me feel safe...
3. Would like to see the victim more empowered related to making changes

4. "really thank God for DVERT, they pulled me through. I'm much more stable now. DVERT helped me get help for my alcoholism and I got treatment and I have not drank in a year." Advocates provided support in all aspects of the case.
5. "Police officers taking reports need education and sensitivity training... they made me feel like I deserved to be beaten."
6. DVERT did not treat me fairly and was not beneficial to me; caused financial problems, stress, and harmed my son.
7. An officer told the perp that if the child "mouthed-off" he could hit her with his fist as long as he did not bruise her. So he pulled her hair and pushed her down and scratched her neck later.
8. DVERT really made a bright point in my process -- hear my views; understand cycles; how to know if he's changing; list of resources I didn't even know about (clothes, food)... Am overly thankful... never have this for whole year of divorce filing ... DVERT officer was compassionate and helpful and understanding
9. Until DVERT came along, I never knew anyone who understood DV ... they were like the cavalry who showed up and knew what war was about ..
10. Have DVERT step in and take more action against the offender
11. DVERT is a great program...without the advocate, I would not have gotten a restraining order ... having an advocate in court was very valuable ... otherwise wouldn't have followed through on charges ... I would probably be 6 feet under right now
12. DA needs to communicate with the community -- only bad experience with DVERT was with the DA's office
13. Need more advocates to help victims
14. Overall DVERT has been really good... I have a 911 cel phone and it's worked great... they have been there when I needed them... they are too short-handed though..
15. Peace Group has been wonderful .. and DVERT, too...has been the backbone -- pull the rope on my end -- Peace group has been able to educate me to accept boundaries and helped me in all aspects of my life...great education...
16. DVERT needs to follow up more
17. Because of DVERT and how everyone has pulled together, it has possibly saved my life... once the offender realized about DVERT and the support I received he backed down to some degree...the outcome would have been different if it was not for DVERT...stalking would have continued
18. Everything has gone well ..DA was very good...judge was very good
19. Advocates were sweet, helpful, great in getting counseling for me...they stick with you... really care about you...
20. DVERT is good -- it's the best thing that could have happened in the situation...

## **Appendix 3: Report of Findings from DVERT Interviews**

*Researcher-Practitioner Partnership with  
the DVERT Project, Colorado Springs, CO:*

*Report of Findings from DVERT Interviews*

prepared by

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## *Executive Summary*

### *Interviews*

Nineteen interviews were completed with persons having key affiliation with The Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (DVERT). Persons were identified by the project manager, the Principal Investigator for the DVERT process evaluation or by persons initially completing interviews. They represented law enforcement, victims advocates, caseworkers, attorneys, medical professionals, and DVERT staff. Job descriptions of these persons varied from first responders to project managers and directors. All interviewees were assured of confidentiality.

Questions were jointly-designed by the research consultant completing the interviews, the Principal Investigator, and the project manager, with input from DVERT staff. In general, questions were open-ended. They covered five major areas: history of DVERT, roles of partner agencies, impact of DVERT on domestic violence, nature of collaboration among partner agencies, and suggestions for improving DVERT.

### *History and Roles*

Interviewees became involved with DVERT through a number of channels which predominately included educational settings (police academy or institution of higher education), job orientations, or active involvement in development of DVERT. They basically understand their affiliated agencies to have one of four major roles in DVERT: staff provision, advocacy for victims, training, consultation services.

Among goals and objectives of DVERT which interviewees identified, five were cited more than others: identification and management of the most lethal domestic violence cases; multi-disciplinary, collaborative team approach toward handling domestic violence cases; perpetrator accountability, victim safety, and consistent, coordinated guidelines for responding to domestic violence. The topic of goals and objectives raised questions for persons interviewed. Some interviewees believe that goals of DVERT have changed with time and that such changes have significant policy implications. The definition of "lethality" and how it can be measured is one example of an area where DVERT's goals and objectives may have changed.

### *Impact*

Interviewees described several major accomplishments of their affiliated agencies as a result of DVERT to date. Accomplishments varied by representation of the interviewee. Respondents from victims services focused on three major categories: inter-agency relationships, services for victims, and organizational accomplishments. Law-enforcement personnel emphasized increased awareness, education, and training; networking; and systems communication among major accomplishments. Interviewees from the Department of Human Services (DHS) indicated that the linkage between domestic violence and child welfare is a major accomplishment, as are organizational changes associated with DVERT. Those affiliated with the District Attorney's office identified tougher plea bargaining, education, effective prosecution, and resource availability.

*Services to women.* The vast majority of persons interviewed believe that services to women have improved as a result of DVERT. They cite improvement through agency collaboration, training, the women themselves, and new programs and initiatives. Of these categories, interviewees focused on the women themselves more than any other area. They

described cell phones, safe housing, and counseling as some of some ways in which services have improved. Challenges to serving victims include feelings of being overwhelmed by the task at hand or personnel issues, such as low pay for victims advocates.

Barriers to improving services were identified by about one-third of interviewees. They include housing needs, limited resources, and potential for the process to re-victimize some women.

*Changes in law enforcement.* Most respondents feel that practices in law enforcement have changed as a result of DVERT. Categories of change encompass education and training, organizational changes (FAST-TRACK, for example), inter-agency relationships, direct services, and resources.

The value of law-enforcement rotations at DVERT has a rippling effect on changing law enforcement. Not only do rotations dramatically change the perspective and knowledge of officers directly involved in a rotation, but the experiences of rotating officers filter back to home departments when rotations have ended. Other examples of changes in law enforcement include better understanding and enforcement of the law with mandatory arrest (along with relevant issues, such as stalking, dual arrests, and primary aggressors), needs in rural areas, and sensitivity to the subject of domestic violence.

A few interviewees described challenges to change within law enforcement which focused on the slowness of institutional change compared to individual change.

*Reduction of violence.* This question was puzzling to interviewees but resulted in provocative comments about this topic. Individuals have diverse images of conceptualizing "reduction." Perspectives spanned a number of themes, including recidivism, victim safety, and supervision by DVERT. Most striking is the conviction among respondents that violence is reduced for women who are active participants in DVERT when recidivism for perpetrators is virtually non-existent. Interviewees struggle with how reduction in violence can be objectively and quantitatively measured. Questions posed to interviewees about whether violence has been reduced for children, as a result of DVERT, generated very similar responses by interviewees -- that violence is reduced for those children whose mothers are actively involved within DVERT's caseload due to a number of variables, such as increased vigilance of those children, and programs and resources for those children.

Respondents are realistic in identifying challenges to reducing violence. Almost one-half suggested that some educational pieces are missing (school programming for adolescents, for instance); DVERT's limitations impact reduction; the nature of the community with its transient population and value system poses challenges; and that there are questions about identifying persons appropriate for intervention. A few persons verbalized the on-going debate of how reduction in violence can be reasonably measured, particularly in light of missing ingredients for the formula -- i.e., lack of knowledge about the full scope of victimization, and deception associated with statistics (paradox of increase in call for services as result of initiatives that are "working").

It is noteworthy that at least one interviewee believes that initiatives like DVERT can have unexpected negative impacts on reducing violence and women victims -- such as the potential of further endangering women with Dependency and Neglect legislation.

## *Collaborations*

*Role differentiation.* The topic of inter-agency collaborations generated lively discussion and opinions. Interviewees differentiated between levels of collaborations: those among “core” partner-agency staff housed at DVERT; those among staff of partner agencies who are split in their physical location (at DVERT and partner agency offices); and those among partner agencies at large. Across the board, the majority of interviewees feel strongly that role differentiation is generally clear. By the same token, the majority also believe that there are conflicts associated with role differentiation. Conflicts stem from a variety of sources, which include intermittent misunderstanding about differentiating roles; sharing common goals with different agency policies to achieve those goals; lack of knowledge about partner agencies’ policies/regulations and constraints; and conflicts over information-sharing.

*Conflict.* The majority of interviewees believe that there are also conflicts outside of role differentiation. However, many respondents emphasize the positive aspects of conflict as well. One person interjected that conflict “speaks for the process” of inter-agency collaboration; another suggested that conflict translates into “healthy debates.” Areas of conflict extend to turf and jurisdiction; definitional issues; decision-making; power/control within DVERT, establishment of in-house disciplinary policies; and some levels of distrust; among others.

Perceptions about role differentiation and conflict are rich in content and underscore both positive and challenging aspects of multi-agency collaboration. They span dilemmas associated with everyday co-existence to overarching differences in philosophies and organizational cultures represented.

*Decision-making.* Decision-making has many dimensions, described by some interviewees as those related to roles of partner agencies, cases specifically, and policies. Within this structure, respondents might judge decision-making at one level as quite “easy” but quite difficult at another.

Further, interviewees have diverse views about how they conceptualize “ease” of decision-making. Some respondents suggest that decisions are made easily because they are made largely by leadership alone, for example. It is critical, then, to review quantitative estimates of “ease in decision-making” within the context of qualitative data to avoid misinterpretation of rankings.

Most generally, respondents are quite diverse in how they view decision-making as a concept and how it technically transpires within DVERT. Their provocative statements broaden horizons for examining the nature of decision-making within a complex, multi-agency environment.

*Meetings and active participation.* Reflective of perceptions toward decision-making, interviewees varied significantly in estimating how often partner agencies meet. Variation appears largely due to different roles and functions among partner agencies. Interviewees identified with “core” partner agencies, particularly those who share physical space in the DVERT offices, describe meetings with one or more partner representatives on daily bases. Other interviewees, including staff from partner agencies who are not housed in common space, are not as familiar with these types of on-going meetings and estimate the frequency of meetings to be much less. Some interviewees acknowledge lack of awareness about the full extent of meetings among various agency partners or representatives.

There are also differences among interviewees in their estimates of how frequently meetings are held with all partner agencies together. Estimated frequency of this type of meeting varied from



"rarely" to quarterly. Views toward active participation in meetings mirror earlier perceptions toward decision-making and frequency of meeting in general: Interviewees perceive affiliates of core partner agencies as participating much more actively in meetings than those who are associated with less involved partner agencies. One interviewee stated that, "...basically, those actively involved are a minute few of the 20+ agencies...;" another suggested that participation is "unilaterally" framed by administration.

### *Suggestions for Improving DVERT.*

The final interview question provided interviewees the opportunity to brainstorm creatively on ways to improve DVERT. They were encouraged to use their individual expertise and unique vantage points to formulate ideas. As a result, interviewees generated a wealth of thoughts and proposals which fell into four general categories: *policies and decision-making, services for victims, resources and manpower, training, and physical environment.* They proposed over 50 suggestions.

*Policies and decision-making.* Just under 40% of all suggestions fell within this category. Interviewees proposed improvements in management and leadership, gave suggestions for current and future directions, voiced opinions about organizational, day-to-day issues, and addressed personnel matters. With regard to management, proposals vary from less "micro-management" and fewer supervisors/managers to more "free-flow interaction among staff at the lower street level, where people are most knowledgeable." More far reaching, ideas range from extending policy-making beyond core membership and ways to perpetuate the ideas of DVERT to limiting DVERT cases to Level I's, only. Organizationally, interviewees express desire for meetings which function more as brainstorming/input sessions rather than as status-report forums, or meetings which tackle tough issues like standardization of thresholds for case inclusion. Under personnel is a proposal for developing consistent internal standards for all staff housed in DVERT offices.

*Services for victims.* Approximately 25% of suggestions are directly linked to victims services. These vary from improving response time, linking services to welfare benefits, developing ways for victims to become more empowered and self-sufficient, establishing more follow-up and long-term care after emergencies, and developing more programs for children.

*Resources and manpower.* Another 25% of recommendations call for more resources and staff generally, equalizing financial commitments among partners, and obtaining support from city and county governments.

*Training.* Ten percent of all suggestions focus on continuing on-going training, expanding training nationally, and developing more specialized and advanced training where appropriate.

*Physical environment.* A few other suggestions propose more physical space generally and more private space in particular -- especially related to phone use.

Twenty hours of interview data from 19 respondents produced a wealth of insight on challenging, complex, and provocative dimensions associated with service provision and collaboration among multi-partner agencies. While these opinions and perspectives do not necessarily represent the majority of all those actively involved with DVERT, they nevertheless establish a strong base for future dialogue and policy-making that builds on past and current successes as well as sources of frustration and challenges.

## **Introduction**

As part of the larger DVERT Researcher-Practitioner Partnership evaluation project, a series of interviews were conducted by this consultant with key persons involved with DVERT. The aim of the interviews was to gather in-depth qualitative information from persons who have had some history with DVERT – either by being involved with DVERT from its inception, from having had an active role in DVERT in the past, or from current affiliation with the project.

Persons interviewed were identified using two different methods. First, the Principal Investigator for the evaluation project, the DVERT project manager, and a long-term staff member of DVERT, suggested names of persons with long-term histories on the project. This process resulted in a core list of about 10-12 key persons. Interviews were scheduled with as many of these individuals as possible under some scheduling limitations.

Second, after each interview was conducted, interviewees were asked to name three persons he/she felt it would be important to interview as well, using the general criteria described above. In some cases, these names included persons already identified for interviews. Using this broadly defined snowball sampling, then, another 12 persons were scheduled for interviews.

From this two-step selection process, 21 interviews were scheduled during time periods when the interviewer/consultant was available in Colorado Springs. Two persons canceled interview appointments, resulting in the completion of 19 interviews.

While these interviews do not by any means reflect the views of the majority of persons affiliated with DVERT, they do provide a wealth of insight into diverse, provocative perspectives of key individuals involved with DVERT. Within this context, then, the findings reported here are rich in content and quality.

## **Methods and Design**

### **Interview topics and format**

The Principal Investigator for the Researcher-Practitioner Partnership project and this consultant worked jointly to develop the interview protocol. They customized an interview instrument used in a previous evaluation project (conducted by the consultant) to meet the needs of the Principal Investigator and DVERT staff for this current grant. Some questions were used verbatim from the earlier project; others were developed specifically for this evaluation project. In particular, questions about role differentiation, collaboration, and conflict were developed specifically for DVERT associates.

Interviews focused on the following main topics:

- Perspectives on the evolution and history of DVERT;
- Various roles of individual agencies involved with DVERT;

- Impact of DVERT on domestic violence and children living in domestic-violence environments;
- Nature of collaboration among partner agencies ;
- Suggestions for Improving DVERT.

Interviews were semi-structured in design. Interviewees were asked to respond to numerous questions under each broad topic. With few exceptions, questions were open-ended. As necessary for clarification, follow-up questions or probes were introduced by the interviewer. In such cases, the interviewer recorded both the wording of follow-up questions or probes and responses to these interviews with 19 persons. This report represents summaries of responses by main topic and questions within each topic.

### **Confidentiality**

Interviewees were assured of confidentiality prior to beginning interviews. Specifically, each person was given a brief explanation of the purpose of the interview, an introduction to the interviewer and her role in the larger evaluation project, assured that no response would be identifiable, and that, primarily, group responses would be reported. If an individual interviewee did give a response to a question in such a way that his/her identity would be apparent, the interviewer indicated to that person that the response would be edited slightly to insure privacy. On rare occasions during the interviews, an interviewee would ask that his/her response not even be recorded on paper. These requests were, of course, honored.

### **Agency representation**

Persons who were interviewed represented the following member agencies:

- Law enforcement – as rotating/overtime officers or detectives (4 interviewees);
- Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence – as victims advocates (7 interviewees);
- Department of Human Services – as caseworkers or managers (4 interviewees);
- District Attorney's Office – as prosecuting attorneys (2 interviewees);
- DVERT staff with no other current member affiliation (1 interviewee);
- Medical field – in advisory capacity for DVERT project (1 interviewee).

Of these, seven persons had formal DVERT-staff positions on the DVERT project in the following positions:

- Staffing Coordinator,
- Training Coordinator (position has since been restructured),
- Project Manager,
- Level II Manager,

- Research and Development Manager,
- Senior Operations Manager (2 interviewees).

## Summary of Responses by Main Topics

### Identifying Information

At the beginning of each interview, interviewees were asked a few questions about their own background, from which the member-agency representation and DVERT staff affiliation, just described, were compiled. In addition, interviewees provided brief descriptions of their current jobs, which varied significantly by interview. Job descriptions included a full range of responsibilities reflective of persons who work as both front-line service providers and responders as well as program managers and directors.

### History of Involvement in DVERT

Interviewees were asked a number of questions about their personal history with DVERT – including when they first heard about it and from whom; when their affiliated agency became involved with DVERT; and what their agency's role was/is with DVERT.

*First hear about it and from whom.* Most of the interviewees' history with DVERT extends back to the last two-three years (1996-97). A couple of individuals indicated that they had heard about DVERT as long ago as 1994, when it was still in discussion and conceptualizing stages. Respondents' first connection to DVERT fell into three major categories – through an educational setting, such as a police academy or volunteer training or higher education; as part of a new job orientation or description; or because of active involvement in the development of DVERT.

Not surprisingly, then, respondents heard about DVERT primarily from presenters, supervisors, or through direct professional connections.

*Member agency involvement with DVERT.* According to interviewees, member agencies became involved with DVERT in a number of different ways which primarily included three: by virtue of being one of the founding member-agencies; affiliation as a member-agency functioning under a Memorandum of Understanding with DVERT (and the Colorado Springs Police Department) and, subsequent assignment of agency staff to DVERT. A couple of respondents were either not sure how his/her respective agency became involved or were solicited for involvement because of specific personal skills/talents not directly associated with a member agency.

*Role of agency.* Respondents basically understand their associated agencies to have one of four major roles: to provide staff for the DVERT project; to provide advocacy for victims; to educate and train partner agencies; and to serve as consultants to partner agencies or professionals in like positions (for example, an assistant district attorney (DA) assigned to DVERT might provide consultative services to other assistant DA's who are not so assigned; or a caseworker assigned to DVERT from Department of Human Services might serve as a resource for caseworkers not so assigned).

Respondents were asked to give their perceptions on two final questions under the general heading of **History of Involvement in DVERT**. These related to goals and objectives of DVERT and major accomplishments of their respective agencies, as a result of DVERT.

*Objectives of DVERT.* In the majority of interviews, respondents named two or three goals and objectives rather than one major goal. Therefore, the total number of goals and objectives described exceeded the number of interviews conducted. Five goals and objectives were cited more than any others, with another five goals and objectives mentioned by just a few respondents each.

The five most frequently described goals and objectives were as follows:

- Identification and management of the most lethal domestic violence cases;
- Multi-disciplinary, collaborative, team approach toward handling of domestic violence cases which has the result of bringing systems together;
- Perpetrator accountability, containment, and services;
- Victim safety, protection, services, and well-being of children;
- Consistent, concentrated, coordinated, guidelines for responding to domestic violence which has the result of providing a seamless approach for domestic-violence cases.

Other goals and objectives described included:

- Education of partner agencies and the community;
- Pro-active combating of domestic violence;
- Lowering of recidivism in the most lethal domestic-violence cases;
- Victim advocacy which includes long-term advocacy;
- First-level crisis intervention.

This question led to several side discussions initiated by interviewees and clearly relevant in their minds. In particular, interviewees elaborated on the goal of identifying the most lethal/dangerous domestic-violence cases, perspectives that goals and objectives have changed with time, and opinions about perceived goals and objectives.

Related to lethality, for instance, several interviewees believe that identification of the most lethal cases is a major goal and objective of DVERT. Nevertheless, they also feel that there is a lot of confusion about what lethality means and how it can be systematically measured or determined. Some respondents also indicated that assessment of lethality and danger has changed over the life of DVERT.

From these persons' viewpoints, cases were referred to Level I, the highest level of lethality in DVERT, more readily in the early days of DVERT because the maximum caseload had not been reached. Today, according to these individuals, the same cases would not be referred to Level I status. Further, with the Level I caseload now at capacity, at least one interviewee raised concerns

about Level I referrals which cannot be immediately served by Level I staff. From this person's view, if a case is identified as lethal and falling under the criteria for inclusion as a Level I case, there should be no waiting period between the referral and case management. In other words, the very mandate of DVERT is to intervene in Level I cases immediately.

In terms of change in goals and objectives over time, a few respondents described change in weight or emphasis from one component of the system to another -- such as shift from focus on prosecution to victims advocacy. More narrowly, a few interviewees described change in goals and objectives among particular member agency staff assigned to DVERT -- such as change in job descriptions, case loads, what they are charged to do, etc. In this context, a few respondents stated his/her opinions about DVERT's goals and objectives -- such as that the goals should reflect the work of one member agency more than another (prosecution over victim safety, law enforcement over victims advocacy, etc.).

*Major accomplishments.* For the most part, interviewees described several "major accomplishments" of their agencies as a result of DVERT. Before summarizing responses from this question, however, it is important to note some confusion and errors that it raised during interviews.

As written in the interview protocol, the question is asking interviewees to think about major accomplishments of their agencies as a result of its involvement in DVERT, not major accomplishments of DVERT itself. Occasionally, this interviewer actually asked the question incorrectly. More frequently, interviewees asked for clarification on the question which led to a follow-up explanation by the interviewer. In other words, the question is really exploring the impact of DVERT on member agencies represented in the interviews.

Summaries of responses to this question are divided by disciplines represented: Victims services personnel, law enforcement personnel, human services personnel, prosecution, and others.

Respondents from victims services described a number of major accomplishments for their respective agency (all being Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence) which could be categorized as: *inter-agency relationships, services for victims, and organizational accomplishments.*

Within the broader heading of *inter-agency relationships*, respondents identified a number of accomplishments. On a general level, interviewees described:

- learning to collaborate and actually collaborating with other agencies that, according to one person, will be sustained even if DVERT were to "go away"-- such as positioning advocates in Community Corrections, Probation and Parole, and Department of Human Services;
- understanding of other agencies;
- developing relationships with other agencies.

Specific to inter-agency relationships with law enforcement, respondents described reaching into law enforcement, developing more positive relationships with police, and increased education/training at police academies as a result of DVERT.

Under *services for victims*, victims services respondents highlighted the following major agency

accomplishments as a result of DVERT:

- Greater access to obtaining restraining orders through the Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence;
- Enhanced case management and advocacy for victims;
- Increase in number of victims served;
- Increase in number of services provided to victims;
- Increase in quality of services provided to victims.

Within the general heading of *organizational accomplishments*, these respondents indicated that their field has benefitted by:

- Increased status for victims advocacy and more attention to victims advocacy;
- Increase in staff and, consequently, more advocates available;
- Increased education;
- Thinking "out of the box;"
- Being forced to ask, "what are we doing right, what are we doing wrong?," and acknowledging that as an agency, advocates from the Center do make mistakes.

Responses to this question by representatives of law enforcement contrasted with those of representatives from victims services along a number of dimensions. However, it is important to bear in mind that only four of the 19 interviews were conducted with persons from law enforcement. Further, for three of them, the question asked by the interviewer erroneously focused on "major accomplishments of DVERT," rather than major accomplishments of the interviewee's partner agency as a result of DVERT. With this qualification in mind, respondents' comments focused on *increased awareness, education and training* as one major area of accomplishment; and *networking, open communication between agencies, "more equality around the table," and "systems talking"* as another major area. Other incidental accomplishments described included *containment* of the perpetrator and *media recognition* of domestic violence.

Interviewees from the Department of Human Services described major accomplishments which shed light on *human-service linkages between domestic violence and child welfare historically*, and *organizational changes* within human services as a result of DVERT. Both of these areas of accomplishment have significant implications for the field of human services, according to these persons.

In the past, interviewees explained, caseworkers were trained to consider domestic violence primarily within the context of direct harm to children – i.e., has a child been injured because of domestic violence? Since the inception of DVERT, caseworkers have become much more aware of domestic violence as a family dynamic which has ramifications for all members, not just those targeted for injury. Consequently, domestic violence has developed into a new dimension of overall assessments in child-protective cases. Perspectives on child welfare have been broadened.

A spin-off of this new perspective is what one interviewee described as a "philosophical shift" (rather than "retraining") in child welfare. By this, the interviewee meant that caseworkers and supervisors are considering and/or actually applying different interpretation to existing laws in place for child protection.

Related to this accomplishment are *organizational changes* in human services as a result of DVERT. In particular, interviewees cite the very existence of a caseworker at the DVERT offices as significant as is the involvement of a victim's advocate with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). In addition, the comfort of caseworkers to deal with domestic violence cases is being enhanced by a manual (in progress at the time of interviews) and from consultation with experts as needed.

The two interviewees from the district attorney's office identified four types of major accomplishments for this office as a result of DVERT:

- Tougher plea bargaining;
- Education of line district attorneys;
- Effective prosecution for a small number of cases;
- Resources available for prosecution and ability to use DA resources for filings.

One interviewee noted that there has been no prosecutorial impact at the misdemeanor level of domestic violence cases, however.

Of the other two interviewees who represented other agencies/affiliations, one person described *referrals from outside/non-partner agencies* as a major accomplishment of those agencies as a result of DVERT.

### **Impact of DVERT on Domestic Violence and Children in Domestic-Violence Environments**

The next few sets of questions focused on different aspects of outcome and impact. First, respondents were asked questions about whether they thought services to women victims had been improved as a result of DVERT. Then they were asked questions about whether law enforcement practices had changed as a result of DVERT and, if so, how. Third, respondents were asked to consider the question of whether violence against women had been reduced due to DVERT's efforts. And, finally, respondents were asked to think about whether DVERT has had an impact on serving women victims in any other ways that hadn't already been mentioned.

*Have services to women victims been improved.* The vast majority of persons interviewed believe that services to women victims have been improved as a result of DVERT. Thirteen out of 19 persons interviewed gave an absolute "yes" to this question. One person did not answer it directly; one person said that DVERT had improved services "some," and one person was not sure if DVERT had resulted in improved services. Three other interviewees provided a qualified statement to this question: Of these, one person's view was that the quality, not the quantity of services had improved; another simply "hoped" services had improved; and the third stated only that there is a "percentage of identified DVERT victims who want no part of us." (This person stated elsewhere in the interview that sometimes the number of persons arriving at a scene can have a negative effect on women victims among other concerns this person raised.)



*How services have improved.* Interviewees who responded in the affirmative to the question above were asked to provide specific examples of how services to women victims had been improved. These responses fell into a number of general themes, which included improvement through *agency collaboration and working together; training* (primarily of law enforcement); a number of areas of improvement which focused specifically on *women victims themselves*; and *new programs or initiatives* emerging from DVERT (such as the Victim Location Program, giving more intense attention to stalking as it relates to violence against women, and education and outreach in the community). Interviewees frequently cited more than one concrete example of improvement. Therefore, the total number of responses to this question exceeded the number of interviews.

The vast majority of examples given – 23 total – were associated with *women victims themselves* and direct services. Interviewees cited improvements in empowering women victims, providing an immediate response to victims, giving women victims critical information about alternatives and resources available to them (such as cell phones, counseling, safe housing), one-to-one intervention, having advocates going to the women when they need help, being able to tell women victims they have someone to call/count on, and linking women victims to other agencies.

For persons who either did not believe that services have improved or they qualified their response to this question, a follow-up question was asked. Specifically, interviewees were asked to describe challenges to improving services from their perspectives.

Six of the 19 persons interviewed responded to this question with 14 different responses, because some persons provided multiple “challenges.” Of those mentioned, five described *barriers to services*, such as:

- housing needs;
- need for on-going mentoring after the emergency of the situation levels off;
- need for providing resources related to “other ways of living;”
- struggles between domestic violence and child welfare philosophically and legally;
- possibilities that the “process” might “re-victimize” women or might be seen as another “system” to control;”
- limited resources.

Five other respondents described *miscellaneous* challenges, such as with space, lack of a diverse staff in DVERT, dilemmas associated with improvements (i.e., that some advocates are pulled in many different directions), and concern about the “unknown” – i.e., victims who are NOT being helped because DVERT may not have identified them.

Four respondents described challenges with *advocates* themselves that – in their minds – have relevance to improving services to women victims. Low pay (sometimes in relation to advocates elsewhere, and in contrast to pay of other staff working for DVERT), being overwhelmed with tasks before them, and the reality that collaboration and working on collaboration takes time away from working with victims, exemplify responses under this general category.

*Have practices in law enforcement changed.* The majority of interviewees believe that practices in law enforcement have changed as a result of DVERT. Eleven gave a positive response to this question, followed by four who were uncertain or did not know if practices had changed, a couple respondents did not answer the question as it was asked or did not answer the question at all, and one individual who gave a mixed – “yes/no” response.

Among comments that supplemented this first query about law enforcement practices were the following:

- Officers who go through rotations at DVERT get a whole different education about domestic violence, and these individuals “make changes in the old cops who do rookie training” (in other words, the older officers learn from their rotation-officer peers and in turn pass this knowledge on to younger/newer officers);
- Changes “boils down to individual officers.... (and) trickling down to know mandatory arrest policies;”
- Anecdotal information – “heard” – that officers themselves are excited about DVERT, reinforced by appearance of some officers who “drop by” the Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence, which was “unheard of before;”
- Particular credit to Howard Black, who, as one person stated, “I put him on a pedestal... His attitude/determination made it (DVERT) go. Compassion/commitment is so great.... leadership.... has to be humorous, compassionate, thick-skinned.”

*How practices have changed.* Delving further into changes in law enforcement practices, interviewees’ specific examples reflected a number of change categories: *education and training and awareness; organizational; inter-agency relationships; direct services for victims; and resources.* One interviewee had no response to this question. Interviewees often gave more than one specific example of change in this question.

The category cited more frequently than any other related to *education and training and awareness.* Fourteen responses fell under this category and specifically included increased knowledge with the following:

- Significant change in knowledge generally from rotation work;
- Better understanding and enforcement of the law with mandatory arrest;
- Domestic violence and stalking;
- Dual arrests;
- Primary aggressors;
- Needs in rural areas;
- Sensitivity to the subject of domestic violence;
- Use of polaroid cameras.

Under *organizational* changes, interviewees cited the impact of rotations on police departments generally, the FAST-TRACK innovation and assistance with FAST-TRACK officers, and working on Level II and III cases with DVERT.

Specific to *inter-agency relationships*, respondents described changes in relationships between various police departments with assigning of rotation officers (described by one person as a “big change... and a painful one because of the shortage of officers...”). According to some interviewees, this practice results in significant change in knowledge by the end of rotations. One respondent noted that, consequently, many rotation officers return to work at DVERT as over-time officers, and there is currently a two-week orientations for all staff at DVERT. This same person also noted that some law enforcement Supervisors will turn to rotation officers for information related to domestic violence cases and their work at DVERT.

*Challenges to change.* Finally, under the general topic of perceived changes in law enforcement, five respondents described challenges to such changes. The remaining interviewees had no response to this question. Identified challenges focused mostly on the *slowness of institutional change* as compared to individual change (for instance, that most of the rotation officers are younger than some of their departmental peers and that “some officers still don’t get it,” or, as one person phrased it, some officers have the view that “DVERT is some mythical place, a little thing over there...”), and challenges of a coordinated response (including the “inaccurate” (as characterized by one respondent) perception that officers are immediately ready to respond to calls when they actually must coordinate with other professionals from other agencies).

*Has violence against women been reduced.* Interviewees were asked about whether they perceived that violence has been reduced as a result of DVERT. This question had been asked by the interviewer in another project in Pennsylvania with some interesting results.

In that project, interviewees found the question sometimes puzzling, definitely challenging, and sometimes difficult to answer. At that time, the interviewer was interested not only in interviewees’ perceptions about reduction of violence but also their associations with measuring reduction. Interviewees had very diverse images of measuring violence reduction and some felt, in that project, that reducing violence was not a major thrust or objective of a coordinated response effort in domestic violence – at least not in the short-term.

For these DVERT interviews, the modal response was a qualified statement rather than a clear-cut “yes,” “no,” or “not sure.” Seven interviewees simply made statements about this question. Four respondents gave an affirmative response, sometimes followed by qualitative statements; and three respondents each gave either a negative response or a “not sure” response, with several of these responses also followed by qualitative statements.

Qualified statements crossed a number of themes:

- recidivism as a measure of reducing violence;
- victim safety as a measure of reducing violence;
- belief that there is reduction for persons in the DVERT caseload;
- other miscellaneous comments associating violence reduction to issues of stalking, victims and perpetrators being more educated, and so on.

The most prominent message conveyed in these thoughtful comments was that when victims are in the DVERT caseload and are being served/supported by DVERT staff, **violence for those women is reduced**. Further, when perpetrators are in the DVERT caseload and are being monitored by DVERT staff, **recidivism for those perpetrators – as one means of measuring reduction of violence – is lowered or non-existent**.

Interviewees who responded with a “yes” to this question frequently qualified their responses as well. Some admitted: “I can’t tell how I know this....,” or, “violence is reduced for victims DVERT has identified” – acknowledging that there is a lot of violence “out there” that no one knows about. It is important to note that just prior to the second set of interviews conducted for this part of the evaluation, there were two domestic-violence homicides in short succession. One was reported in the news at the time of these second interviews. In neither case was the victim known to DVERT.

Some respondents indicated either in the negative or “don’t know/not sure” to this question elaborated on their responses, also. One person who responded “no,” added: “the recidivism has been (reduced); the actual ‘act’ (of violence) - no.” Another person who felt uncertain about an answer responded: “(I) can’t answer this because (I/we) don’t get any data – a bone of contention for me - no information on whether we’ve reduced anything.” This person spent some moments talking about frustration related to this point. The person added, “we see statistics on families served, interviews conducted, etc. I want to see the number of arrests that have been made, injuries, calls for services, etc., after families are brought into DVERT – this is what I want to see..... a month ago, I asked \_\_\_\_ about this, and .... told that this information/data wasn’t there.”

*How violence has been reduced.* Because of the high numbers of persons who qualified responses to the question about whether violence against women has been reduced as a result of DVERT, only seven of the interviewees described specific examples of how violence has been reduced. It was not appropriate to ask the other 12 respondents to respond. Even for those who did provide “specific examples,” these mirrored earlier comments for the most part – i.e., that reduction was unmeasurable (at least at the time of the interview), that low recidivism while being served under DVERT was a specific example, and that victim safety while being monitored under DVERT as active cases was another example.

*Challenges to reducing violence.* When respondents indicated that they were either unsure about whether DVERT’s efforts have resulted in a reduction of violence, or that they felt that violence against women had not been reduced, a follow-up question was asked: “If not, what has worked against this reduction? Eleven interviewees were not asked this question or had no response. Of those who did, numerous isolated themes emerged, including:

- The “educational piece” is missing – programming in schools or with adolescents, for instance;
- There is a struggle with de-activating cases and long-term intervention;
- The limits of the Level I caseload and manpower restrictions associated with that;
- Difficulty with measurement of violence reduction generally;
- Nature of the community:

- transient
- people don't want to be involved
- people believe that domestic violence is family business
- people don't know what domestic violence is
- as an "expanding universe – new people all the time, constantly changing;
- Questions raised about identifying people (in reference to the most recent homicides);
- Issue of lethality – i.e., there are models "out there to use" but "no reliable, consistent criteria out there.... (I have) some professional objections and responsibilities related to this 'lethality' labeling..."

In addition, interviewees offered some other provocative comments within the context of this question. These were related to such dilemmas and realities as:

- Once a case ("relationship" to DVERT) is over, one doesn't know what happens in that situation – (we) "see them for a small amount of time;"
- There is the "potential for retaliation with increased bonds (perpetrators wanting to punish victims);"
- "You can't measure how many people didn't get beaten up" as a result of DVERT;
- With children, increased awareness is leading to increased calls – how does one interpret the meaning of this in terms of reducing violence?

Interviewees were asked one final question specifically directed at serving women victims.

*Has DVERT made an impact on serving women in any way that hasn't been mentioned?*

Almost half of the interviewees responded with a general, positive response to this question without further qualification; three persons gave no response; and another four persons didn't think DVERT has made an impact in other ways not already mentioned.

The four remaining respondents provided a variety of thoughts associated with DVERT's impact on serving women with some persons identifying multiples ways in which an impact has been made. For all of the following, the number of responses ranged from one to three each:

- Providing help with relocation;
- Providing equipment and other resources to serve women better, such as:
  - 911 cell phones
  - Pagers
  - Services for children which, in turn, serve women victims

- Providing taping and recording devices for victims;
- Enhancement or increase in procedures, which among other outcomes, can give women better sense of safety and protection, such as:
  - Preparing women for court by District Attorney personnel
  - Presence of police officer and advocate at court
  - Increasing bonds for perpetrators, along with other means of intimidation
  - Providing opportunities for victims to report violations
  - Checking/following-up and repeated contacts with victims
  - Increasing advocacy which, in turns, gives victims the sense that someone is “out there” for them
  - Visibility of coordination/partnerships between police officers and advocates for victims
  - Increasing services at the District Attorney’s level;
- Educating victims to help in the prosecution of cases (maintaining journals, for instance) and in understanding responsibilities to children;
- Better understanding by advocates;
- Making services more available – in outlying communities, for example;
- The “little things” – such as increased personalization of police.

Finally, one respondent believes that DVERT has had some negative impact on serving women victims. This person described some of the repercussions that could arise with laws to charge women victims with Dependency/Neglect if they do not protect their children from being exposed to domestic violence. From the respondent’s point of view, this kind of interpretation of the law on Dependency/Neglect could inadvertently result in alignment of perpetrators and victims against the “system” – in this case, the system being the Department of Human Services. This person noted, also, that different persons working under the DVERT umbrella organization have distinct obligations. For the caseworker from the Department of Human Services, the primary obligation is the protection of children which could, in some cases, appear to be in opposition to the primary responsibility of an advocate.

Interviewees were asked to consider the question of whether DVERT has made a difference in reducing violence against children, in addition to being asked about the impact of DVERT in decreasing violence toward adults.

*Has violence against children been reduced as a result of DVERT?* This was a difficult question for interviewees. Half of the respondents believe either that DVERT has not resulted in decreased violence against children or do not know whether it has or not. Two persons did not answer this question.

Some of the respondents who felt unable to answer this question definitively did provide some follow-up thoughts for their responses. Their comments, albeit representing the views of a few single interviewees, focus on *strengthening/increasing of services/programs* for children; *increased vigilance* over children in violent homes; and *impact of interpretation of child-abuse laws* for further protecting children from violence. In particular, these interviewees described:

- Programs or services for children, such as DOVE, which are generally provided for children of victims participating in DVERT services (as either Level I or Level II clients);
- Similarities between children and women who are being monitored and assisted as Level I or Level II clients: i.e., children of these women would possibly or even quite probably benefit from experiencing less violence in their lives at least during the time of their parents' involvement with DVERT;
- Increased accountability within the DVERT caseload related to children.

Interviewees who do perceive DVERT as having some role in reducing violence against children were asked to provide examples of how violence is reduced.

Ten interviewees had nothing further to add to the general question. Of those offering examples, a few repeated thoughts conveyed earlier – i.e., that violence could/would be reduced for cases within DVERT. At least one person cautioned that this perception could not be applied to the “county overall,” however. Another indicated that violence against children would be the same as violence against women. This person elaborated that when police and DHS respond to violence against a spouse/partner, “it’s smart to pay attention to the children.... self-evident that it would go down, too.” Among other examples were the following, expressed by single or a couple of respondents each:

- In terms of witnessing violence, violence has been reduced for children with increased involvement of social services (one person proclaimed that it may sound hard, but social services will, “yank the kids if she’s [the mother/victim] is not going to protect them”);
- In situations of domestic violence and its link with child abuse, along with change in law to include child abuse charges, it’s “easier to get [child-abuse] charges to stick – get that charge of child-abuse.” This logic and practice, then, will have the result of reducing violence for those children involved;
- Education of victims on the effects of witnessing violence by children;
- Time spent by caseworkers with children in developing safety plans for themselves;
- In a chain of events, the “just watching” by DVERT staff: “Mom encouraged to protect her children; Dad knows he’s not going to get away with it... (I) imagine Mom’s possible abusive behavior [to children], because of her pressures, would also lighten up with DVERT.” (This person acknowledged that these views might differ from those of the “Coalition”);
- “Goes the same line” (as for reducing violence against women): “.... those families who are present in the DVERT community, that community is far more aware of risks to children and DVERT can take a bow for that.” This person elaborates further that, for

some time, the two (adults and children) are "in concert." Once the theme was there, everyone has picked up on it "...since around 1995 to today... come a long way to putting the two together."

While considering questions/responses addressing violence and children, interviewees appeared to be more tentative, reflective, and perhaps less confident about how to respond. Thus, their thoughts were frequently qualified or supplemented by conditional phrases. Lack of quantitative evidence to support statements was voiced by at least one interviewee. The flavor of the responses is not unlike those related to questions about whether violence against women has been reduced as a result of DVERT. A prevailing theme embedded in responses is that these persons have not concentrated on the impact of DVERT in these terms because of concentration on the work at hand.

## **Collaborations**

The last major theme addressed in interviews centered on inter-agency collaborations and the relationships among partner agencies. Questions focused on perceived number of partner agencies; role differentiation among partner agencies; conflict related to role differentiation; more general types of conflict among agencies; decision-making among partner agencies; and meetings and participation by partner agencies.

*Agency involvement in DVERT.* Surprisingly, there was a lot of variation among interviewees on the perceived number of partner agencies involved in the DVERT project. (Partner agencies were generally depicted as those having signed Memoranda of Understanding with DVERT as opposed to agencies with informal collaborative arrangements.) Only one person gave a definitive/absolute number of partner agencies, and this person's figure was "32." Eight, or almost half of all interviewees estimated the number of partner agencies to be between 25 and 30. Two respondents estimated "much more than 15" or "between 20-30." The remaining eight respondents believe the number of partners ranged from "around 20" to between 20 and 25.

*Role differentiation and conflicts associated with role differentiation.* This pair of questions evoked considerable discussion. Responses were rarely cut and dried but moved from initial responses to fairly detailed examples and scenarios to supplement perceptions. Further, interviewees clearly differentiated among numerous ways for conceptualizing role differentiation and related conflicts. In general, they diligently separated the two ideas – differentiation and conflicts over differentiation.

For instance, some interviewees examined role differentiation among what they referred to as core partner agencies staffed in DVERT offices. Others focused on role differentiation between partner agency staff housed in DVERT offices and their fellow agency peers in similar positions but housed at agency offices (caseworkers from Department of Human Services (DHS) housed at DVERT versus caseworkers housed at DHS offices, for example). Still other individuals reflected on role differentiation as it relates to core partner agencies and other partner agencies (which they sometimes defined as part of their response). In thinking about conflicts over role differentiation, this pattern of reflection and response was very similar.

Quantitatively, the majority of respondents believe that there is clear role differentiation among DVERT partner agencies. Twelve out of 19 respondents gave a positive answer to this question. Four respondents believe that differentiation is not clear or is confusing. Three were not sure whether role differentiation existed. Among the "short" responses to this question, interviewees nevertheless qualified their answers by sometimes emphasizing that role differentiation might be clear "outside DVERT" or confusing "inside DVERT" or that the question, itself, was an



interesting one.

On the topic of conflict, the majority of respondents (13) again answered in the affirmative – that there are conflicts associated with role differentiation. Three indicated either that they don't see this type of conflict or believed that there are not conflicts in this area. A few respondents either did not answer this question, responded either that there “can be” such conflicts, or didn't know whether such conflicts exist.

It is important to review and summarize elaborations of responses to these two questions which emerged in interviews. They bring to light a number of significant, provocative perspectives that are critical to understand in light of national emphasis on inter-agency collaboration and partnerships. Further, these elaborations bring to vivid light the diverse views/perspectives of persons involved, even when they describe similar basic scenarios and situations.

These responses are worth reporting as described because summarizing would dilute the rich character of comments evoked. The list below captures respondents' words verbatim to the extent possible from interview notes. Words in parentheses fill in gaps in words among interviews. Quotation marks are not included, for ease in reading:

*Role differentiation/conflicts among partner agencies.*

- There are partners with Memoranda of Understanding (agreements) at the top; but (they) may not know what's going on with those on the bottom, those in the trenches, or they are not listening to those on the bottom;
- Everyone (is) afraid of losing their turf;
- There are conflicts among roles: For example, social services may feel that children need to be removed, and the Advocate is trying to give Mom another chance.... (there are) conflicts between the DA's office with advocates, with social services...;
- (There are) always conflicts over roles – for example, when to pull children.. And the (conflicts) between the advocates and DA's (office) and DHS and law enforcement – not big conflicts though;
- (I) think we work them out very well, no stabbing in the back, each understands each has a different role;
- (Collaboration) has taught me the role of others and becoming more educated on true role of the partners;
- Yeah, see (conflicts among) five main partners: DHS, CSPD, DA, Sheriff, and the Center.... on staff assigned, process, etc.....see others (partners) not in real conflict;
- Thinks there are misunderstandings over roles – each member is unsure, at times, of what the other can/cannot do. For example:
  - Victims tell advocates something which leads to advocates telling officers that they “must arrest” and don't understand what goes into an arrest,

- For an officer with child abuse: may tell a caseworker that the child must be taken out of a home and not understanding what must be involved for a child to be removed,
- Just NOT KNOWING – this is what I’ve learned so much about – social services (for example).... I have a whole different understanding of their work;
- Absolutely (role differentiation). (We) never forget who we are... (staff) talk like an advocate; talk like a cop...;”
- Easiest conflicts are dealing with victims and kids: victims or protection of children.... cops thinking of arrest (in cases where, yes, she is a victim but a crime has been committed) or with prosecution... here, we’re trying to evaluate that – “tiers of privilege”.... here, priority is safety/protection, not necessarily arrest/prosecution;
- Think so (that roles are differentiation)... could be some (issues associated with differentiation) between caseworkers and CASA (both for children, and that could be a gray area); otherwise, roles are clear;
- Yeah, definitely between the main ones (partners): advocates/officers, caseworkers/DA:
  - Same goals with different policies (for example, “pulling kids” or plans for keeping kids in the home that could look like victim-blaming),
  - Also, officers may not always believe what an advocate takes at face value,
  - (There are) conflicts regarding facts/opinions of the case,
  - Generally, starting to understand (each other) in-house,
  - Harder from the outside (co-workers)..... from experience of working together daily, makes it easier;
- ..... Have to say that collaboration has been a huge legal problem (explaining that the deputy district attorney is now excluded from staffing meetings that he/she was included in originally, and that this person no longer has access to files because, by doing so, the entire file could be turned over in court hearings);
- Yes, think so (that there is role differentiation).... continue to be what were before the collaborations – expanded, mutated but primary mission remains the same... (And) yes (there are conflicts), particularly between advocacy and prosecution – conflicts there. Advocates encourage victims to use the system; ultimately, if the victim doesn’t want that, (advocates) don’t require it. Prosecution prosecutes individuals and will require victims’ participation even if the victim doesn’t want it (prosecution)..... to a certain extent, there is an unwillingness to understand the other’s view;
- Hardest in collaboration is information-sharing – very tricky, sharing in meetings,

discoverable (exculpatory) evidence and the result is that the assistant district attorney (ADA) does not attend certain meetings.... the ADA knows that a file exists on victims at DVERT and acknowledges this, but not what is in the file, so it can be opened, reviewed by a judge, and then a decision is made about whether to bring (information) into evidence;

- (I) think roles are clear cut outside of DVERT. Think that within DVERT, we know what our roles are but (may have) a different knowledge, so we (advocates) may start talking like a cop or a cop may start “active listening” on an individual level, some crossing over.... everyone is attached to a parent agency but are isolated from it and being here, may start talking/acting differently than staff at the parent agency. It’s almost like DVERT is its own agency now...;

Yeah (conflicts over roles): (what) comes to mind (is) that there are two layers of partners -- those with staff here – conflict over roles for them, but (not so much) for those who don’t have staff here...;

For example: for staff here, there could be conflict over whose role it is to provide space (the building, phones, etc.) – more conflict over the role of DVERT than of the agencies’ roles;

- Yeah (conflicts over roles): The biggest is how structured everyone’s role is in responding to domestic violence – perhaps (would be) faster if decentralized... (it’s) frustrating, need more flexibility;
- Don’t know the division of power.... have looked for it – looked for power struggles, turfdoms, haven’t seen (any)... has to do with Howard’s leadership, who is a unique person...

(This person adds later): I just thought that partly a reason for no “in-fighting” might be that the playing field is level financially – everyone is here on a grant, has money, don’t have to ask, “is my agency going to get the dollars?” Maybe that’s a factor in cooperation, maybe money is a part of it;

- Yes, clear each has a role – but also learn from each other but “keep the hat they came to the table with.” Don’t see (conflicts among roles): people are really strong in their convictions, easily able to sit around the table and talk about... early on, with roles, there was a fear of the unknown: for example, if an officer had to make an arrest, the caseworker might have felt that the advocate had to tell the victim that she was going to be arrested... have found out that the advocate doesn’t need to do that;
- Think so (conflict over roles): early on, with DA-role and representative from DA at DVERT, (there was) the question about whether that person would just prosecute DVERT cases or others. Also, CASA’s role at DVERT: still struggling for that and have been for a long time.

The thoughtful words expressed by interviews on the topic of role differentiation and conflict demonstrate both positive and challenging aspects and dimensions of collaboration. Most impressive is the thoughtfulness of interviewees as they reflect on the complex multi-agency model of DVERT and hard-core, “rubber meets the road” realities of true collaboration and partnering.

*Conflicts among agencies.* Beyond thinking about conflict associated with role differentiation, interviewees were asked to reflect on conflict more generally. Each interviewee was asked whether he/she perceives conflict among partner agencies.

Respondents focused on a variety of avenues for addressing this question. Some gave a simple “yes/no/not sure” kind of response; others focused on specific topical areas where conflict arises; and still others addressed conflict within the context of collaboration and environmental factors associated with conflict.

Interviewees sometimes gave multiple responses to this question. Four out of 19 interviewees either believe that there isn’t conflict among agencies, or they don’t think there is. A few respondents provided a more general view – i.e., that conflict is a part of collaboration and compromise; that conflicts are addressed and resolved, which “speaks for the process,” and that conflict translates into “healthy debates.” Another interviewee spoke generally about partners “not (being) involved in decision-making” or that “things are too rigid.”

The more informative responses were provided by interviewees who highlighted specific content areas that are prone to conflict. The majority of interviewees gave concrete examples of conflicts associated with particular issues. These run the gamut, from internal, organizational conflicts to external, inter-agency conflicts to conflicts between leadership style and staff. With one exception, however, areas identified below reflect the opinions of only one or two persons each. They include the following:

- Turf or jurisdictional issues (mentioned by three interviewees);
- Definitional issues – specifically, what is meant by “lethality” and does it differ by agency representatives or even over time within DVERT?;
- Decision-making among partners;
- Power/control within DVERT (which is described as “ironic” given the focus of/philosophy on empowering victims of domestic violence);
- Flaws and inconsistencies within the judiciary;
- Establishment of in-house disciplinary policies and need not to violate policies of partner agencies;
- Variation among mindsets within DVERT for handling certain kinds of situations and cases;
- Personality issues;
- Prosecutorial/DVERT issues associated with resources, education and training of assistant district attorneys, and policies;
- Tunnel vision of some agency representatives, resulting in “different solutions to the same problem;”
- Some levels of disrespect, mistrust, or “back-biting;”

- Atmosphere (within DVERT) not always “positive.”

Interviewees were then asked to respond to a two-part question related to decision-making. First, interviewees were asked whether they thought decisions were made easily. Second, they were asked to rank the level of ease with which decisions are made on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being “easy” and 1 being “difficult.”

This question evoked varied responses. Several interviewees were confused by the way the question was worded. Many wanted further clarification – i.e., what kinds of decisions? For them, different types of decisions were made more or less easily.

In response to this confusion, this interviewer worked with one interviewee early in the interview schedule to identify categories of decision-making that were thought to be relevant. Three were identified: decisions associated with roles; decisions associated with cases; and decisions associated with policies. Within “case” decision-making, some interviewees distinguished decisions as either “major” or minor.” This interviewer subsequently offered this differentiation to interviewees who demonstrated similar confusion and need for clarification. It was not offered for those who seemed comfortable answering the question as it was originally constructed. In retrospect, it would have been preferable to revise the question consistently for all subsequent interviews.

At another level, some interviewees differentiated between decisions which are made internally or among partner agencies and those which comes from an outside, higher force – i.e., law or Colorado Springs Police Department, for instance.

Interviewees also conceptualized “ease” in decision making very differently. For persons who perceive management/administration and leadership as “unilateral,” they sometimes concluded that decisions are made easily because there is less discussion/interaction associated with making them. Thus, a ranking of “10” needs to be interpreted in this context.

The degree of variation in interpretation associated with this question sheds light on the myriad dimensions of decision making, which could be useful in developing future questions on this topic. Responses are also useful for thinking about the whole concept of decision-making from the view of inter-agency partnerships. Some interviewees clearly believe that difficulty in making decisions among diverse agency partners is a clear indicator of viable collaboration. Thus, these persons would rank “decision-making” as difficult (or low) but view the low ranking as a positive -- indicative of a strong, committed partnership.

In contrast, some persons who believe that decisions are made at the top administrative level conclude that decisions are made “easily” because they are determined by one person. These interviewees rank decision-making high, therefore, but suggest that partners may not have been involved or do not play a pivotal role. In this case, a high ranking has more of a negative connotation.

*Ease with which decisions are made.* Aside from these general themes and patterns, there is no clear trend among interviewees’ views. The range of perceptions is quite broad with no clear majority or minority view. Examples of these diverse points of view and subsequent ranks, which demonstrate the points just made, follow. These examples are written as close as possible to the interviewees’ wording, but, again, quotation marks are omitted for ease in reading:

- About a "4" because (we) are collaborating; can't just make a decision;
- Decisions are made unilaterally, because \_\_\_\_\_ makes them. This is a problem because DVERT is supposed to be a team. Team decision-making is not happening. \_\_\_\_\_ asks for input but makes decisions..... a "law enforcement" perspective. A "10;"
- Yes and no – but my sense is that regardless of how difficult (the process is), there is full support (for decisions). Sense (is) that there is good morale; see commitment to do the best we can. Sometimes "1;" sometimes "10." Don't think this is a good question – always somewhere in between – depends on the kind of decision, the particulars...;
- Decision-making regarding how the unit is run is easy – lots of latitude – about a "7." Decision-making from above is much more difficult (above our heads). For example, city police working in the county requires their being "commissioned" to do this – can't get it resolved even though DVERT is cross-jurisdictional...;
- Role decisions are made easily – "9;" case decisions are made easily – "10;" policy decisions (such as suggestions about the directions of DVERT) are more difficult because exploring unknown directions – more central core that makes those decisions; sometimes down to one person (\_\_\_\_\_) – about a "4," hard to make;
- Case-related decisions: Major decisions are more difficult to make – "1-4;" case related decisions: Minor decisions are more easily made – "5-8;" policy related decisions: difficult (not personally involved but feel this way) – "2-3;"
- Feel that my opinion is valued; no matter what it's about – paint on the wall or homicide. Decisions for cases (are held) in a team environment; on-going; open or not, my opinion mattered. So, made decisions easier – therefore a "9." Bigger ones are more difficult because there are more people to please – about a "6;"
- Decisions are easy – a "10".....(compares to decision-making within law enforcement as a point of reference);
- Definitely, none are made easily. Decisions about Level I, II, III – about a "4;" case management – about a "7;" staffing decisions – about a "5;"..... always by a group of people;
- Can't speak to the current system (not currently involved). Historically, no, not made easily – people grapple – about a "4;"
- For me, decisions are made easily on programs/procedures rather than those related to legal issues/boundaries (like legal issues that could be pending and would have an impact on what people can/do do);
- Have a sense of more toward a "4" (on the difficult side). Attempt to integrate a law enforcement environment with a human services environment together – but have \_\_\_\_\_ with a law enforcement background and clear chain of commands, and people struggle. \_\_\_\_\_ needs to delegate; there are a lot of people with great ideas. Need to release control. People wait for approval.... \_\_\_\_\_ needs to step back; let managers do what they need to do;

- About a “7” (across the board). \_\_\_\_\_ makes the final decisions. Rarely do I disagree – if I do, I understand.... a “7” comes from his leadership, communication skills, honesty. If a difficult decision has to be made or come to, \_\_\_\_\_ is there to give direction – that’s why there is a sense of conviviality. It starts from the top. People know they can count on \_\_\_\_\_;
- Operations decisions – about a “8;” case management – about a “9;” and decisions on a case – about a “7;”
- What kinds? Decisions made about the organization – made pretty easily; responsive to anything – about a “10;” decisions about core issues for cases already in DVERT (are) a bit more difficult – go back and forth about it – about a “3;” staffing decisions at the table – difficult; trying to identify “lethal” families.....about a “6;”
- No first-hand experience but guess would be about a “3” – group pretty resistant to change....

Interviewees were asked to indicate how often their (representative) agency met with the others (partners). They frequently asked for clarification on this question as well. What is meant by “meeting” (informal versus formal gatherings)? What is meant by “others” (core, all partner agencies, etc.)? What level meetings (line staff versus administrators)? And so on.

*Frequency of agency meetings with others.* This question resulted in very mixed responses, not surprisingly. Depending on one’s own particular role with DVERT, and depending on whether an individual interviewee represented one of the “core” partner agencies (described by one person as the Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence, Department of Human Services, District Attorney’s Office, and CASA), then, individuals cited frequencies that varied from numerous times a day to weekly or monthly one on one or in group format. One person described interactions among agency partners thus:

“Different agencies interact constantly – always meeting, whole spark of the idea... Inter-agency, excitement.... That’s the “Enhancement” part of the Response Team.

More surprising, however, was the range in responses associated with meetings for all partner agencies. Even when interviewees focused only on this group designation, estimated frequency of meeting varied tremendously, from: one time only; rarely, quarterly, biannually, at least once a year; or, “not aware of any such meetings.” In addition, several persons indicated that they are not privy to the number or frequency of meetings held. From these interviewees’ perspectives, a number of meetings could/are probably held among agency leaders/administrators, but they would not necessarily be aware or informed on these meetings.

*Active participation in discussions by other agencies.* Similar to the question about meeting frequency, interviewees varied substantially in their thoughts about active participation. Clearly, however, there is the vision of uneven participation and active involvement, depending on the status of a partner agency. Not surprisingly, those agencies with staff housed in DVERT offices are perceived to be more active participants in on-going discussions with other partners’ participation ebbing and flowing, depending on the issue at hand. As one person put it, “basically, those actively involved are a minute few of the 20-plus agencies.... and (I have) no idea (about full extent of meetings/participation) because DVERT staff go out to meetings (I am ) not aware of.” Another interviewee described agency partners as “not bashful” and eager to get into dialogues and discussions. A third described differences in opportunities to be involved, depending on the role

played by individual partner agencies. Finally, one person reflected on participation as “unilateral,” framed by administration with “little discussion about how things will be done.”

### **Suggestions for Improving the DVERT Project**

The final interview question related to ideas and suggestions for improving the DVERT Project. This question gave interviewees the unique opportunity, based on firsthand experience and knowledge, to brainstorm and be creative if all the “stops” could be pulled. Every person interviewed offered his/her own thoughts and suggestions about how the DVERT project might be improved.. Responses were provocative if not always, admittedly, realistic.

The majority of suggestions fell under four general categories: *policies and decision-making; services for victims; resources and manpower; training; and physical environment*. Over 50 specific suggestions were made by the 19 interviewees, with just under 40% of all suggestions falling under the category of *policies and decision-making* within DVERT. Most interviewees had more than one idea related to improving DVERT overall. Suggestions made within each of these general categories are described both quantitatively and qualitatively in the following paragraphs.

*Policies and decision-making.* Ideas in this category include numerous diverse suggestions which fall loosely four major themes: management and leadership, current and future directions, organizational/day-to-day issues and personnel matters. Often, interviewees supplemented their suggestions with explanatory comments to expand on proposals made:

- **Management and leadership:**
  - Fewer supervisors and channels, described as “micro-management” (interviewee explained that there are five supervisors for another 12 staff members and “two sets of bosses” [the partner agency “boss” and the DVERT “boss”]);
  - Make Howard Black an “Administrator;”
  - Need more “free flow interaction among staff at lower/street level, where people are most knowledgeable” (adding that DVERT is “too controlled at the top”);
  - Individuals like Howard Black -- a “big micro-manager but could lose something if he weren’t;”
  - “Don’t let Howard get old;”
- **Current and future directions:**
  - “Directions and policy decisions need to be expanded and not left to the core”
  - Would be “good to see all coalition members set goals and directions, long-term; not just core and short-term goals”
  - Continue to evolve in areas of communication
  - Need to open up to “partners” -- “for dialogue and less than a statement”
  - Be cautious/careful about adding new members (expressed in the negative: “[we



don't necessarily want more agencies ..... Just brought in probation")

- Refrain from adding more programs (also expressed in the negative: "[we] don't need more programs, except for programs for children in schools");
- Get the concept out to people;
- Some way to "perpetuate the idea -- financially and ideologically;"
- Publicity and media visibility in the community (explains that the Chief of the Colorado Springs Police Department has not been in the DVERT facilities even though he received accepted an award given to DVERT some years ago);
- De-centralize Levels II and III with DVERT having only Level I's;
- Organizational/day-to-day issues:
  - Quarterly meetings (which) would focus on those in attendance offering input (this interviewee perceives these meetings to be a good idea but that currently such meetings are "update/status report meetings rather than input/brainstorming meetings");
  - Hold combined staff meetings (this interviewee explains that they are "a lot of DVERT meetings but not with staff from all agencies [there may be a DVERT person speaking at an agency or vice versa, but not all staff hearing/asking at once.... "Would get to know each other... "]);
  - Standardize thresholds for cases taken into DVERT and "focus on families who truly need it;"
- Personnel matters:
  - Consistency among people in DVERT from different agencies associated with standards for pay, benefits, layoffs, etc. (this interviewee elaborates by saying that DVERT is in a financial crisis [at the time of the interviews] and that half of the DVERT staff are city/state employees; half are non-profit employees).

*Services for victims.* Another one-quarter of suggestions for improving DVERT are directly linked to services. Some persons focused on existing services -- how they could be enhanced, improved, or made more efficient/effective. Others focused on staff who provide services and how their procedures could change to improve services for victims. Still other interviewees looked toward new services or new linkages between existing services as means for improving services and, ultimately, DVERT. Specifically, interviewees suggested the following:

- Better response time;
- "Stepping up" investigations along with being more innovative and consistent in investigations;
- Developing more options -- "(to) keep that person on a voluntary basis, engage her in staying with DVERT.." (referring to a situation in which a woman wanted her case to be

de-activated and it was, although the “danger” levels had not changed);

- “Ways” to compel/engage cooperation of victims better to make them empowered and self-sufficient;
- Have advocates go out on all domestic violence cases (not just the “on-call” team);
- Provide resources to victims, such as financial support and job skills, and other means to “remove the barriers to her so that she doesn’t have to stay in the situation...;”
- Link services to TANF;
- Be less “scattered,” which results in being able to focus on the families;
- Continue to work as a unit on “how to best serve clients” (this person added that there is a “lot to learn in Level II and III cases”);
- More follow-up with cases brought into DVERT (this person added that “DHS always had the ability to compel people -- (DVERT ) not there -- DVERT back away from this...;”
- Clarification about follow-up on open cases (“What does it mean?”.... “Hear about advocates calling a person in an open, Level I case once a month...”);
- More programs for children of victims.

*Resources and manpower.* About one-fourth of suggestions to improve DVERT focus on resources and manpower. In order to protect confidentiality of responses, some suggestions about resources are kept deliberately vague because the particular suggestion was intricately tied to role/function of individual interviewees. Further, some suggestions offered under this category were simply more general in nature than those offered in other categories. In general, we see interviewees differentiating between increase in resources generally that could result in improving DVERT and perceptions about resource distribution. The following are examples of suggestions made under this category:

- More manpower/staff generally;
- Larger staff for the larger number of cases;
- More resources -- especially for Level II cases (“.... Getting really hard and staff are stretched thin”);
- More equal financial partners (comparing, for example, Colorado Springs Police Department and the Center);
- More hospital outreach (identified as currently lacking, due to not having “had resources to do that”);
- More personnel: including district attorneys, advocates, detectives, cops (including one interviewee’s commentary about the “mismatch between the number of advocates and number of detectives,” describing DVERT as having “four detectives assigned but Howard Black doesn’t take cases... versus nine advocates with four having big caseloads...”);

- Get more funding (with money “for a building” mentioned by one person specifically);
- Get support from county and city governments;
- Get partner agencies to “support the process” (interpreted as financial support, since this person added “the money DVERT has won’t last forever”);

*Training.* Training represented about 10% of all suggestions offered as a means for improving DVERT. Each suggestion under this category addressed a unique dimension of training, as indicated below:

- On-going training;
- More local training at the local community level -- i.e., including law enforcement, schools, and professors;
- Training within the state of Colorado;
- More “global” training among “all agencies”.... “meat of the agency, cross-training...;”
- National training “in collaboration” (this interviewee explains that with “multi-media stuff.... we’re learning as we go... we’ve been at it longer than others... want to share this so as not to re-invent the wheel....”);
- Need to expand/change training to others who come in for site visits and nationally -- “no more ‘DV 101’ -- need ‘201,’ ‘301’ -- tracks for persons who’ve done it for some time and who’ve had the basics.”

*Physical environment.* Finally, the remaining few suggestions made by interviewees addressed space and provisions. Suggestions pointed toward challenges faced by staff working under tight physical constraints and how DVERT could be improved in these areas:

- Office space which is comfortable (mentioned by two interviewees with one adding that with “nice” space “twice what we have.... attitude and morale, though good, would be significantly improved...);”
- Phone systems/sharing -- (“the most serious problem we face” according to one of three persons who identified this area; another person described the current situation as a “standing in line” problem -- explaining that at one point five staff members were sharing the same phone);
- A permanent building.

Suggestions made by interviewees reveal great insight and thoughtfulness regarding the myriad, complex dimensions of DVERT. They underscore on-going challenges to meet the needs of victims and then share ever-increasing expertise outside the realm of DVERT. They also highlight the realities of need associated with workplace environment and financial security. Perhaps most profound, however, are the suggestions which illustrate so poignantly the huge task of bringing diverse partners together to implement a true, collaborative, coordinated response to a common problem of immense proportions.

## Concluding Thoughts

The preceding summary of findings depicts mere highlights from approximately 20 hours of personal interviews. As consultant who was privileged to conduct these interviews, I was deeply impressed with the time and thoughtfulness given to all queries, and to the frank discussions that ensued. These characteristics assured me that interviewees both trusted me and are committed/dedicated to the work they do with DVERT.

The diverse and vast number of themes emerging from responses to questions cannot easily be summed up here but, hopefully, are set forth within the body of this report in such a way as to encourage further digestion, reflection, and dialogue. Overall, however, I am struck by the breadth and levels of perspectives which emerged from interviews – from the most mundane, day-to-day grinds that any organization/project faces but which are multiplied many times in DVERT to the most sophisticated dynamics of policy-making within such a complex multi-agency setting.

I feel confident that the time spent by these 19 individuals, all of whom have precious little time to give, will reap rewards from the unique contributions they have made in this component of the evaluation project.

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