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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

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RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

Project Description

The research is a process evaluation conducted by researchers from the Center for the Study of Crime, Delinquency, and Corrections at Southern Illinois University, entering into partnership with the organizations in the city of Carbondale and Jackson County, IL, that comprised the central membership of the local coordinating council (called the Steering Committee). These agencies include:

- * The Carbondale Police Department (CPD)
- * The Carbondale Women's Center, Inc. (Women's Center)
- * The Jackson County State's Attorney's Office (SAO)
- * The Jackson County Probation Office (Probation)
- * The Domestic Violence Clinic Program, Southern Illinois University School of Law (DV Clinic)
- * The Southern Illinois University Department of Public Safety (SIU Public Safety)

The three objectives of the evaluation partnership were: 1) to compile a descriptive analysis of the approach taken in inter-agency collaboration and to document the project history; to identify research issues related to the safety of domestic violence victims of priority in Carbondale; and 3) to work with participating agencies to prepare for a potential outcome evaluation.

The Carbondale Police Department has been the recipient of grants under the Violence Against Women Grants Office program "Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies". In this report, as in Carbondale and Jackson County, these grants are referred to as the "Pro-Arrest" grants. The

researchers centered their analysis on what were thought to be the most significant activities and accomplishments of the Pro-Arrest grants from the standpoint of project participants.

Scope and Methodology

Because this is a process evaluation, the data collection techniques were largely qualitative. The Project History draws heavily on documents such as minutes of meetings, grant reports, letters, agency protocols, etc. and also includes observational data from meetings of the Steering Committee over a period of 18 months and data from interviews with key project participants. In addition, the Project History includes quantitative data derived from records at the State's Attorney's Office and the Circuit Clerk's on-line database. The analysis of Victim Advocacy is based largely on interviews with victim advocates in Carbondale and Jackson County, although it includes data from reports and other documents. The examination of the Domestic Violence Clinic at the SIU School of Law includes observations of the law school classes, interviews with the DV Clinic Directors, interviews with law students, and analysis of quantitative data derived from the Clinic's intake forms for a total of 109 cases opened over a period of 19 months. The Community-Based Support Groups are examined primarily using observational data collected over 17 observation weeks; interview data are also included. The Joint Police-Probation Patrols to check on offender compliance with no-contact bond and probation orders are analyzed using data from observations in which a researcher rode along with Probation and police officers over a 3 ½ month observation period. The research also includes an analysis of the Program Model, Information Exchanges, and Plans for the Future using data from interviews and documents such as grant proposals and reports.

Limitations of the data include limited observation periods, small numbers of cases, and

problems of generalizability.

Findings

Project History

- Under a series of Pro-Arrest grants, the city of Carbondale and Jackson County have achieved significant gains in providing a coordinated community response to domestic violence. The major objectives of the community response are victim safety and offender accountability.
- Major accomplishments include:
 - the establishment of an ongoing coordinating council (the Steering Committee) composed of representatives of key agencies
 - law enforcement training, expanding from Carbondale to smaller municipalities in Southern Illinois, as well as training for advocates, probation officers, treatment professionals, and other key agency personnel
 - an educational video for victims of domestic violence
 - the establishment of law enforcement and prosecution protocols for responding to domestic battery
 - the creation of a Domestic Violence Clinic Program at the SIU School of Law
 - a consolidated records management system for the Carbondale Police Department and the SIU Department of Public Safety
 - the establishment of one ongoing community support group for victims and survivors of domestic violence

- the addition of advocacy services for victims of domestic violence through a Follow-up Advocate
- the development of “directed patrols” which team Probation and police officers to check on offender compliance with no-contact bond and probation orders and to provide victim safety checks
- The project Steering Committee has been vital to the success of this local effort. The Steering Committee’s purposes are to identify problems and needs, to solve these problems, to coordinate activities across agencies, and to provide a networking forum. Over time, this coordinating group has overcome several challenges, including:
 - rather substantial turnover in agency personnel and leadership
 - a loss of momentum once major achievements were made
 - a loss of involvement of agency heads, signaling to the group a lessening of the priority of their work

Victim Advocacy

- Victims of domestic violence in Carbondale and Jackson County receive advocacy services from an array of agencies, the most central of which are the Women’s Center, the Carbondale Police Department, the Jackson County State’s Attorney’s Office, the Jackson County Sheriff’s Department, and the Domestic Violence Clinic at the SIU School of Law.
- In Carbondale and Jackson County the network of victim advocates is readily defined and is a small enough group that they know each other well and meet

fairly regularly on formal and informal bases. The advocates play a major role in the coordination of services. Whether located within the criminal justice system or external to the system, the victim advocates see their goals as promoting victim safety and preventing repeat violence. They regard their work as being there for the victim, whatever the victim needs or wants.

- The Follow-up Advocate position at the Women's Center, which had been thought to have great potential for providing assistance to victims once their offenders had entered the justice process, has been plagued by both practical (lack of clients) and operational (keeping the position funded and occupied) problems. It is important to involve the Follow-up Advocate early in the criminal justice process and to consider re-defining the Follow-up Advocate job description to permit advocacy for victims who choose not to cooperate with law enforcement and prosecution.
- Inter-agency coordination of victim advocacy services requires finding unique solutions to meeting the requirements for confidentiality of client information of agencies such as the Women's Center.

Domestic Violence Clinic

- The Domestic Violence Clinic Program at the SIU School of Law was created to make attorneys available for victims who would otherwise go unrepresented and thus enhance the likelihood of success in attaining plenary orders of protection. Domestic violence victims benefit by receiving free legal services. The DV Clinic also serves to educate law students in domestic violence issues and provide them

with hands on legal experience. Thus, the DV Clinic plays an important role in the coordinated community response to domestic violence.

- Evidence indicates that the DV Clinic has met its objectives and is generally successful in obtaining its goal for each case. Unsuccessful cases are partially explained by client behavior and case merit.
- Problems and service gaps center around: client withdrawal, inability to handle divorce cases, non-domestic violence related questions, and a limited service area.

Community-Based Support Groups

- The Women's Center has been successful in establishing one ongoing support group for victims of domestic violence which meets weekly at a local church and is facilitated by a domestic violence counselor. Although the number of clients receiving support group services has been small, the group is viewed as important in the overall array of services to victims. The Women's Center is continuing its efforts to establish additional support groups.
- Key themes incorporated in support group sessions included: the cycle of violence, traumatic bonding, issues of choice and why battered women stay in relationships, secondary victimization by service providers, and empowerment.
- Support group members articulated common issues: having a fearless attitude, censoring their own true feelings, distrust of others, apprehension of people they meet, being defensive, a belief that society does not condemn domestic violence offenders, a lack of education about the criminal justice system, a need for increased victims' rights, and difficulty leaving abusive relationships.

Joint Police-Probation Patrols

- The Carbondale Police Department and the Jackson County Probation Office have been successful in establishing ongoing, random checks of victims and offenders in order to monitor offender compliance with no-contact bond and probation conditions.
- To identify suspects/offenders/victims for visits, the team of Probation and police officers rely on lists prepared by Probation and by the CPD victim advocate.
- Observational research revealed variability in time spent at visits, whether repeat visits were made (long-term cases or short-term), whether the victim requested services or information, and variability in types of relationships (spouses, lovers, brother-sister, cousins).
- Perhaps the major problem confronted by the teams is having accurate, up-to-date address information. A second problem, which has since been addressed, is having “cold” first-time encounters with victims, some of whom would prefer not to be visited.

Program Model, Information Exchanges, and Plans for the Future

- The researchers developed flow charts depicting the relationship between project activities and the major project goals – victim safety and offender accountability.
- The Steering Committee has provided a forum for discussion of some significant issues related to information exchange– what information agencies want from each other and what they get. Confidentiality of client information at the Women’s Center is a central issue for the group.

- Future grant plans called for additional support for the State's Attorney's Office, expansion of training for rural law enforcement, expansion of DV Clinic services to an additional county, and expansion of availability of victim services through overtime pay for evening hours at the CPD.

Recommendations

The complete final report of the project offers a series of recommendations for the Steering Committee as a whole as well as for individual agencies. The report also contains recommendations for research.

Analysis and Conclusions

Largely through a series of Pro-Arrest grants to the city of Carbondale and the Carbondale Police Department and through the efforts of a strong coordinating council, the Project Steering Committee, the city of Carbondale and Jackson County have made great strides in addressing problems of victim safety and offender accountability in domestic violence. The federal funding has been essential in establishing an array of programs and services, as well as in providing needed law enforcement and other training in domestic violence. The Project Coordinator and the Steering Committee have effectively utilized these funds to identify and solve problems related to domestic violence victim safety and offender accountability. While several practical and operational problems were identified in the course of the research partnership, the results of the process evaluation indicate success in inter-agency collaboration to address an important social problem. Notably, the inter-agency coordination involves criminal justice and non-criminal justice agencies, as well as the city and the university.

Carbondale and Jackson County are located in the rural, south of Illinois. This location,

combined with the unique challenges of a small city with a diverse university population, has brought special benefits and liabilities to the Pro-Arrest grant activities. Given the city size and rather limited number of key agencies, it has been easy to identify the key players in inter-agency coordination. Strong involvement of agency heads at the onset of the project contributed to its early successes, and the early gains, coupled with continued funding, have carried the Steering Committee forward, even though the involvement of agency heads is waning.

On the other hand, Southern Illinois is largely rural and service-poor, which has led the Steering Committee to examine ways to expand services such as law enforcement training and victim advocacy to other counties. In addition, the small size of cities and towns in Southern Illinois and its rural nature can be an obstacles in service delivery. For example, it has been difficult to establish more than one ongoing community support group for women, in part because the numbers of women seeking this service are not sufficient to sustain groups in communities outside of Carbondale.

Readers interested in greater detail on the specific program accomplishments and the project history are encouraged to turn to the Final Report.

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