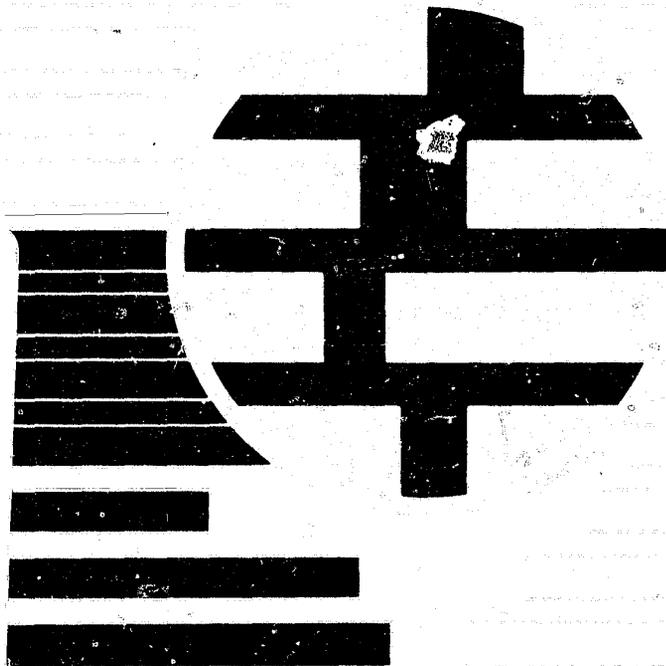




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REPORT ON
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT:
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVEY

September 11, 1978

by L. Edward Day

Statistical Analysis Center

CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION SYSTEMS
J. David Coldren, Director

ILLINOIS LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION
Daniel W. Weil, Chairman
James B. Zagel, Executive Director

NCJRS

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ACQUISITION

Domestic violence, which has long been considered a private, in-family matter, has recently become a media phenomenon.¹ News stories have focused on women's shelters, landmark court cases involving abused women, the fears of battered husbands, and other aspects of these crimes, bringing their seriousness to public attention. A number of scientific studies have also considered domestic violence. It has been reported that one out of four homicides occurs within the family, that more than one out of ten aggravated assaults occur within the family, that more police officers are assaulted on domestic violence calls than any other type, and that domestic disputes and disturbances make up the largest category of requests for police assistance (See Michaelson, et. al., 1977). However, research on how law enforcement agencies handle this problem has only started recently, and facts pertaining to our own state are rare.

The Illinois Commission on the Status of Women (ICSW) recently conducted a study of this issue in Illinois. A questionnaire was designed and administered to police departments and sheriffs' offices throughout the state according to a mailing list supplied by the Illinois Local Governmental Law Officers Training Board. The list included 780 police departments and ninety-nine sheriffs' offices. University police and other non-local government law enforcement agencies were not included. The returned questionnaires were then given to the Criminal Justice Information Systems - Statistical Analysis Center (CJIS-SAC) for analysis.

The purpose of this research is exploratory, to discover how police departments and sheriffs' offices in Illinois handle, or believe they handle, domestic violence calls. As such, this report is more valuable as a guide to further research than as an informative document. The questionnaire is geared more towards the perceptions of the law enforcement agencies than actual law enforcement statistics. This orientation could result in a biasing effect in favor of the agencies. Nevertheless, the findings reported here are the best estimates presently available on this issue in Illinois.

¹The definition of domestic violence used in this paper can be found on the questionnaire in the appendix.

The following report is given in six short sections. The first deals with information concerning the response rate. The next four sections explore the substantive areas of the questionnaire, and the sixth section presents conclusions and suggestions for further research.

RESPONSE RATE

Of the 780 local police departments on the mailing list, 191 responded, resulting in a response rate of 24.5 percent. Of the ninety-nine sheriffs' offices who received the questionnaire, thirty-three returned them, for a response rate of 33.3 percent. The overall response rate was 25.5 percent.

There was no apparent relationship between those returning the questionnaire and the size of the agency or the size of the jurisdiction it served; however, it should be pointed out that these levels of response are poor at best, and the reader is cautioned that under some circumstances the following results may not be generalized to all law enforcement agencies.

AGENCY EMPHASIS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

There were three questions which measured the overall emphasis an agency places on domestic violence calls. The first dealt with whether or not the agency has a written policy for handling these calls. The second is a measure of the department's "priority" policy for handling domestic violence calls. The third question double checks the response to the second by asking whether these cases receive more, the same, or less attention than other physical injury cases.

There were 188 police departments that responded to the question on written policy. Of these, fourteen percent reported such a policy for answering domestic violence calls. Of the thirty-two responding sheriffs' offices, about six percent had written policies.

The question on priority policy asked the agencies to specify whether domestic violence calls were given top priority, if all calls were responded to in turn, if domestic violence calls received low priority (i.e. were responded to after any other calls), or if there were other priorities. Roughly half of both the police departments and sheriffs' offices reported that domestic violence calls have top priority, and approximately fifteen percent of each group reported that these calls receive top priority unless a call of greater emergency arises. There were no agencies that reported that domestic violence receives low priority.

The third question seemed to indicate that slightly less emphasis is given to domestic violence calls than the above question indicated. The overwhelming majority of both groups stated that domestic violence receives the same amount of attention as other physical injury cases. Very few agencies reported that it receives more attention, but even fewer reported that it receives less.

ACTIONS OF AGENCY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CALLS

In order to determine the preferred methods for handling domestic violence calls, the questionnaire listed six possible actions that the law enforcement agencies could take, plus an "other" category, and asked the agencies to specify whether each action was taken almost always, frequently, infrequently, or almost never. The six possible actions were: (1) arrest for battery; (2) arrest for disorderly conduct; (3) restoring order/no arrest; (4) separation of parties/no arrest; (5) referral to counseling facility; and (6) discouragement of parties from filing complaints.

Of these possible actions, the most frequently reported is the simple restoration of order. The majority of both the police departments and sheriffs' offices also listed the separation of parties without arrest and referral to a counseling facility as common dispositions. Neither group regularly makes arrests; however, neither group regularly discourages parties from filing complaints.

Only twenty police departments and one sheriff's office marked the "other" category. The majority of responses to this specified one or more of the following: encouraged parties to file complaints; parties refused to sign complaints; and referred to State's Attorney or private attorney. Several agencies wrote an additional note saying that charges rarely go to court because the party filing the complaint changes his/her mind after a few days and asks that the charges be dropped.

AGENCY RECORDS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CALLS

The respondents were asked to report the number of domestic violence calls received and the number responded to over the past year. They were also asked to report how many of these were repeat calls, the number that resulted in arrests, and the number that resulted in homicides or serious injuries. It was discovered that only about one-third of the 175 responding police departments and one-third of the twenty-eight responding sheriffs' offices even keep these figures, and fewer reported them. The majority of both groups includes these cases with other physical injury cases and/or other cases involving disturbance of the peace. A few agencies from each group reported that they keep no records at all that relate to domestic violence. This lack of reported data precluded any statistical analysis of these questions.

The respondents were then asked whether or not an individual officer responding to a domestic violence call would know if it was a repeat call. Of the 184 police departments and thirty-two sheriffs' offices that responded, about half claimed that their officers would have this information. However, nearly half of these clarified their responses by adding that this information comes from the officer's personal knowledge due to the small size of the jurisdictions. Actually, about one out of four reporting agencies use their records to supply their officers with this information.

TRAINING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CALLS

A certain level of training for all officers is required by law. Very few agencies reported that they did not have a regular training program. The majority of both the police departments and sheriffs' offices have their officers attend the Police Training Institute at the University of Illinois. Other training centers are located throughout the state.

Two questions were designed to find out how many law enforcement agencies receive specialized training for domestic violence situations. One asked whether or not the training program included a component on domestic violence, and the other asked specifically about crisis intervention training.

Slightly more than half of all the police departments and sheriffs' offices which responded reported that their officers received these types of training. It should be noted, however, that the reliability of these findings is questionable. Several agencies that reported the use of the same training program had conflicting responses to these questions.

Related to the inquiries on specialized training was a question asking whether or not each police officer carries a list of referrals for shelter, counseling, support groups, and legal assistance for abused women. Slightly fewer than half of all responding agencies reported that their officers do carry such a list, and slightly fewer than half reported that they do not. The remainder stated that such a list is available at the station or through the dispatcher, that a social unit within the department or a social agency makes such referrals, or that only some of the above items are available.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The section on the emphasis an agency places on domestic violence calls indicated that these cases are treated equally with other crimes in the responding agencies. It is worth noting, though, the small number of agencies that have established written policies. This represents a possible void in criminal justice administration which should be addressed.

It was pointed out that arrests for domestic violence are not common. This questionnaire was not structured in a way which allowed testing whether or not this is effective in dealing with the problem. A study comparing the type of action taken on a domestic violence call with the probability of a repeat call from the same household would help criminal justice planners establish a policy in this respect.

One of the most striking findings of the study was the small number of agencies that keep records pertaining to domestic violence. These records would be necessary for more in-depth research on domestic violence, and it seems reasonable that such records would be helpful to the administrators of law enforcement agencies.

The design of the questions dealing with specialized training prevented any type of analysis concerning the effectiveness of this training, and the number of conflicting answers prevented any conclusions about the number of agencies that receive this training. Information on this issue would be very helpful to agencies faced with a large domestic violence problem, and the question should be explored further.

APPENDIX

DEFINITION: For the purposes of this questionnaire, the term domestic violence is defined to include physical injury, the threat of physical injury, or sexual abuse between any two people who are sharing or have shared the same household.

1. Name of Police Department:

2. Address:

3. Name and Title of Person Answering Questionnaire:

4. No. of Officers in Department:

5. * What is the geographic area served by your department? City only County only
 City and County More than one City More than one County Other (please specify)

6. What is the approximate population served by your department?

7. Does your department have a written policy for the handling of domestic violence calls? (Check one)
 Yes No

8. When your department receives a domestic violence call, which of the following most closely describes the USUAL DEPARTMENT PRACTICE for this type of call?

- Top priority given: call responded to before response to previous calls.
- Call responded to in turn, after response to previous calls.
- Low priority: call responded to only after response to any other calls (regardless of time received) involving property or person.
- Other (please specify)

9. Of all the domestic violence calls within the past year to which your department has responded, about how often were the following actions or dispositions taken?

(Please Check One)	<u>Almost Always</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Infrequently</u>	<u>Almost Never</u>
Arrest for Battery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrest for Disorderly Conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restoring Order/No Arrest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Separation of the Parties/ No Arrest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referral to Counseling Facility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discouragement of Parties from Filing Complaints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Which of the following statements most closely describes your department's OVERALL PRACTICE regarding domestic violence cases? Domestic violence cases receive more attention, than other cases of physical injury.
 Domestic violence cases receive the same degree of attention as other cases of physical injury. Domestic violence cases receive less attention than other cases of physical injury.

* QUESTION 5 WAS CHANGED TO A REQUEST FOR THE NUMBER OF SQUARE MILES OF THE JURISDICTION ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEDICAL OFFICERS

11. If your department gives domestic violence cases less attention than it gives to other physical injury cases, which of the following most closely describe the REASONS for this treatment? (Check as many as apply) The calls are too numerous Danger of injury to police officers Lack of belief in the seriousness of the complaining party's injuries Parties do not usually wish police intervention Domestic violence is a family matter, not a crime Other (please specify): _____

12. Over the past reporting year, how many of the following are reflected in your department RECORDS?

	<u>Annual Figure</u>	<u>No Statistics Kept</u>
(A) Domestic violence calls <u>received</u>	_____	_____
(B) Domestic violence calls <u>responded to</u>	_____	_____
(C) <u>Arrests</u> resulting from domestic violence calls	_____	_____
(D) Repeat calls from previous domestic violence situations	_____	_____
(E) Homicides/serious injuries resulting from repeat call situations	_____	_____

13. If your department does not keep the above statistics, how are domestic violence calls categorized for record-keeping purposes? Included with other physical injury cases Included with other cases involving disturbance of the peace No records kept Other (please specify): _____

14. When an individual police officer in your department responds to a domestic violence call, does he or she possess a RECORD or other means of determining whether this is a REPEAT CALL? Yes No
If yes, what data are used for this purpose? _____

15. Does your department have a regular training program for new officers? Yes No
If yes, where are your police officers trained? Police Training Academy, Chicago Police Training Academy, Urbana Internal training by own police department Other (please specify): _____

16. Does the training program include a component on crisis intervention? Yes No
If yes, please attach outline and training materials.

17. Does the training program include a component on domestic violence/battery? Yes No
If yes, please attach outline and training materials.

18. Does each police officer have a list of referrals for shelter, counseling, support groups and legal assistance for abused women? Yes No

Please feel free to attach any other pertinent information.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

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