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William F. Weld	Kathleen M. O'Toole	Jonathan Petuchowski
Governor	Secretary	Executive Director
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	Executive Office of Public Safety	Programs Division

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING:

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

157406

William M. Holmes, Ph.D.

NCJRS

NOV 8 1995

Rhiana Kohl, Ph.D.

ACQUISITIONS

Diana Brensilber

Charles Kaufmann

July, 1995

Statistical Analysis Center
Executive Office of Public Safety Programs Division

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INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has focused an increasing amount of attention on programs aimed at diminishing domestic violence and has disseminated resources to these programs accordingly. Such programs have included those designed to prevent the recurrence of domestic violence by training law enforcement officers on how to respond to related incidents. The federal Edward Byrne Memorial Formula Grant program in Massachusetts has identified domestic violence programs with training and education components as priorities among recipients of funding. Training for law enforcement and criminal justice officials, in general, has been emphasized by a number of state funded initiatives in the Commonwealth as well as many other states.

The allocation of funding to training programs was supported by the belief that such programs can be the much needed link between officer behavior and the reduction of violence in domestic disputes, whether against officers and/or victims (C.J. of the Americas, 1991; Crime Control Digest, 1991a; Training Aid Digest, 1991). Court decisions have also underscored the importance of adequate training (AELE Liability Reporter, 1990; Crime Control Digest, 1991b). In addition, there has been some suggestion that the failure to provide training in an area may be a way of avoiding the problem (Aaron, 1991).

Training programs for law enforcement personnel who respond to domestic violence calls use several tactics. Primary objectives of the trainings include conveying information, providing moral and administrative support, and the opportunity for role-playing different responses (Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council [MCJTC], 1992). Each of these methods were considered necessary for changing knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of criminal justice personnel (MCJTC, 1992). As with any program intended to invoke change in how people handle a situation, training programs must carefully address appropriate issues and consider the unique aspects of both the intended audience and the material presented to be effective. If training materials are improperly designed, they may even encourage violence (Crime Control Digest, 1991a).

Even when training programs appear to change participants' attitudes or knowledge, they do not necessarily alter behavior (Braye & Preston-Shoot, 1991; Rynerson & Fishel, 1993; Sgarzi, 1992). However, such changes have been considered to at least encourage desired behavioral changes (Gagnon & Lavoie, 1990; Stith, 1990). Thus, when evaluating training programs, one must examine which strategies and tactics are most likely to produce desired outcomes. This report describes the evaluation of two domestic violence law enforcement training programs in relation to the enhancement of increasing both knowledge in the area and related changes in officer's behavior.

This report provides an overview of:

◊ The process undertaken to conduct the evaluation;
◊ The methodology and major findings of the evaluation;
◊ Obstacles to the study and strategies for dealing with them; and
◊ A description of the process of integrating evaluation findings into programs.

Problems Evaluating Training

Evaluating the implementation and impact of these programs has posed a challenge for the Commonwealth's Statistical Analysis Center, the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice, and evaluators in other states (Brown, 1990; Choi, 1990; Dunworth & Saiger, 1992; Gabel & Nimick, 1990; Garner and Visher, 1988; Holmes, Mignon & Headley, 1993; Urquiza, 1991). This challenge arises because of the difficulties in measuring implementation and impact, as well as problems in design. It is difficult to develop appropriate measures of changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors intended to be modified by these training programs. There are also difficulties in measuring the effects of presumed changes in the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of criminal justice officials on domestic violence outcomes. Some of the training programs also state expectations for "long-term outcomes," rather than short term results more amenable to study.

The designs used are often compromised by legal, ethical, political, and resource constraints. Even when a powerful and rigorous experimental design is used, the protocol may be vulnerable to violation. Some of the controversy over the Minneapolis domestic violence experiment resulted from officer ability to change the randomly assigned treatments (Sherman, 1993). When the experimental protocol breaks down, it is extremely difficult to redesign the study to substitute an alternative powerful design. Resources have already been expended. Promises to research sites, Institutional Review Boards, and subjects have already been made. Credibility and trust may also be compromised.

Problems in evaluating these programs raise questions that need to be addressed. What are the expected outcomes of these programs? Is it to change knowledge, feelings, attitudes, behavior, or some combination of the above? How can these changes be measured in ways that have reasonable levels of validity and reliability? What research designs can provide information on the outcomes of these projects that meet acceptable professional standards for evaluation information?

To answer these questions this project has three specific goals:

◊ Improving the capacity of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to evaluate criminal justice training programs, including improved measures of the impact of domestic violence training programs;

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◊ Production of a report identifying more successful domestic violence training programs in Massachusetts;

◊ Production of a report identifying procedures and strategies for enhancing capacity of state agencies to evaluate criminal justice training programs.

In achieving these goals, the above questions are addressed.

Addressing these problems for evaluating domestic violence training programs is important because of the human costs of the violence. This is also a priority subject area upon which federal intervention is intended to have an impact (National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 1993). Reducing these problems increases the capacity of state agencies to better evaluate criminal justice training programs, in general, and domestic violence training programs, in particular. It also contributes to research evaluating domestic violence intervention programs, for which measurement issues have been a recognized problem (Sherman, 1993). Findings from this study aid current Department of Justice program initiatives in domestic violence (Andrew, 1989; NIJ, 1993).

Previous and Current Work
The Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) in Massachusetts has conducted previous research in domestic violence and the evaluation of domestic violence intervention programs (Holmes & Bibel, 1989; Holmes, et al., 1993). Information from these studies provided some limited evidence of positive effects of training programs. The utility of the evidence was reduced because the findings were unable to address some issues for which measurement problems could not be resolved. The studies strongly identified a need to improve measurement of key variables when evaluating these programs.

EVALUATION OF TWO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Program Selection for Evaluation
All six of the domestic violence programs funded by the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice (MCCJ) with money from the federal Byrne grant were originally considered for this evaluation project at the inception of the study. Five of these projects had training components: the Roxbury Court Domestic Violence Program, the Cambridge Police Department's Operation Safe Home, the Criminal Justice Training Council programs on Violence Prevention and Public Awareness, the Attorney General's Elderly Protection Project, and the Department of Probation's Domestic Violence Training. With the assistance of an NIJ technical advisory team, the two programs selected to provide the information herein were the Cambridge Police Department's domestic violence program (Operation Safe Home) and the Attorney General's project focusing on elder abuse. The study built on and is more comprehensive than the internal evaluations incorporated into the projects themselves.

An Overview of Each Project Evaluated

<u>Cambridge Police Department Operation Safe Home</u>
The project began on July 1, 1993. This program planned to develop an integrated response system between Cambridge police and community organizations. The system included a computerized database for monitoring domestic violence and sexual assault cases. Project components included the deployment of personal alarm systems, implementation of domestic violence investigation teams, and the development of domestic violence offender profiles. The project also worked with the city's Commission on the Status of Women in a publicity campaign on domestic violence.

The two specific objectives were:
1. Utilization of a standard approach by officers of the Cambridge Police Department; and
2. Linkage of the police department with community based advocacy for victims and abusers.

Evaluation of the project by the Cambridge police analyzed patterns of and responses to domestic violence using a computerized database. It cross-referenced incidents with repetition of offenses, restraining order violations, presence of children, and use of weapons. The offender profile developed was used to identify risk factors for repeat offenses and the offender's potential for dangerous actions. This project would imply the need to develop behavioral outcome measures.

<u>Attorney General's Training Program to Combat Elder Abuse</u>
The Elderly Protection Project's, "Interdisciplinary Training Program to Combat Elder Abuse," was administered by the Office of the Attorney General for the Commonwealth and began on July 1, 1992.

The project provided multi-disciplinary training for over 400 police officers. Training materials were developed and disseminated to the District Attorney's Offices and to the Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council. Model protocols for police responses to incidents of elder abuse were also developed.

The specific objectives were to:
1. Review existing elder abuse training programs and conduct a state-wide survey to assess the need for elder abuse training to develop a curriculum for such training;
2. Develop model protocols for police and protective services personnel;
3. Provide training materials for police officers and protective service personnel;
4. Devise and implement a prototype training program at five locations across the state;
5. Organize and present the pilot training programs;
6. Assess the effectiveness of the pilot training programs through the use of a

mandatory evaluation instrument for conference participants;

7. Utilize the evaluations of the pilot training programs to finalize the model protocols and training curriculum;

8. Disseminate the training materials through the use of a final report; and

9. Coordinate the development of a plan for subsequent training by the Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council.

Evaluation of the curriculum and protocols by the Attorney General's Office used qualitative assessments of police chiefs and officials in concerned state agencies. For training sessions, an evaluation form was completed by participants on their reactions to the training materials and the training sessions. Evaluation forms were also sent to training participants between six and twelve months after the training. These follow-up instruments asked what aspects of the training were most useful to police officers and what additional materials would have been beneficial. Thus attempts were made to assess self-reported changes in attitude as well as behavior.

DATA COLLECTION

NIJ Technical Assistance

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) provided a technical assistance team to help the project. Technical assistance helped determine which domestic violence training programs to include in the evaluation and what research methods were used. Technical assistance in the design and plans for implementation of training programs were especially desired since there are long standing difficult obstacles encountered when evaluating such programs. Information provided by the technical assistance team enhanced the capacity of the Massachusetts SAC to evaluate these types of programs even after this particular project was completed.

The strategy for data collection was the primary area in which technical assistance was requested. The two strategies used most often for evaluating training programs are pre-post designs and post-test only designs. The pre-post designs are sometimes augmented by comparison groups that do not undergo training. The application of pre-post design for domestic violence training has looked at knowledge and behavior of criminal justice personnel before and after training. Knowledge measures with this design have focused mainly on knowledge of existing statutes, regulations, and recommended procedures. Behavioral measures have looked at provision of court protection orders, arrest practices, and other police responses. Post-test only designs often rely upon retrospective information on perceived change from prior actions and knowledge and speculation on future actions or knowledge use. For example, questionnaires at the end of a training session may ask what police officers might do differently as a result of the training or what information they found "helpful" or "useful" (without specification of helpful in what way or useful for what purpose).

Design

A number of difficulties arise with these designs. The pre-post design confounds historical and developmental changes with the training (Campbell & Cook, 1982). If the pre-test is given immediately at the beginning of the training to reduce bias from history and development, subjects may recall material at the time of the post-test, creating an instrumentation effect. Such training programs are often voluntary, allowing for sample selectivity to alter the findings (i.e., selecting criminal justice personnel receptive to change and overstating what the program effect would be for personnel resistant to change). The use of comparison groups provides some improvement, but these comparison groups are often not strictly equivalent. The voluntary nature of some training means the groups are not randomly assigned and, consequently, require statistical control procedures to be used to remove some of the pre-group differences. Even with random assignment, there is a significant risk of contamination of the experiment. Those taking the training may communicate what they have learned (if anything) to their co-workers, including personnel who are in comparison groups. We have observed that the transmission of information between departments is quite high when officers define it as important or interesting. This implies that the greater the effect of the training program, the more likely information from the program will contaminate the comparison group.

The weakest form of the post-test only design typically asks those who have completed a training program to use their recollection of the training to evaluate how much they have learned and changed or use speculation to project how much they think they will act differently in the future. The strongest form of post-test only design incorporates random assignment into treatment and control groups. This strategy, however, requires that the subjects not have the opportunity to communicate with one another before the post-test is given. It also means that subjects cannot volunteer for or decline the training, which may increase levels of resentment at not being given a choice. This may attenuate the intervention effects of the treatment.

Measurement

Greater clarity is needed regarding the outcomes to be measured and how best to measure them. Training programs may alter knowledge, emotions, attitudes, or behaviors--either intentionally or unintentionally. Goal statements for these projects may mention some or all of these targets for change.

Instruments to measure changes resulting from training are highly varied and sometimes quite vague. Poor instruments may simply ask respondents how much they have learned from the training, how much they have enjoyed the course, or how helpful it seemed to be. Slightly better instruments may represent tests of knowledge or attitude scales, which may or may not have been examined for evidence of reliability or validity. Even behavioral measures, such as used in the evaluation of the Massachusetts mandatory arrest law for violators of court protection orders (Holmes et al., 1993), can be confounded by altering the behavior of others who are affected by changes in the criminal justice officials. For example, in the evaluation of the impact of the mandatory arrest law, the number of arrests increased, but a substantial group of cases still did not result in arrest. This was, in part, due to perpetrators leaving before the officers arrived. Whether

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offenders became more prone to flee the scene before the officers arrived, as a result of the change in the arrest law, could not be determined by the study, but it was a possibility.

Policy Advisory Panel

An advisory committee was formed to provide specific input regarding the substantive focus of the research and utilization of the findings. This advisory committee included the domestic violence policy specialist for the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice, the domestic violence training coordinator for the Criminal Justice Training Council for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and a criminal justice researcher from the University of Massachusetts at Boston who had experience in the study of domestic violence. These individuals had been involved in a variety of roles in the policy making process.

EXAMINING THE TRAINING PROJECTS

Two Approaches to the Study

The study used a combination of experimental and quasi-experimental methods to examine impacts of domestic violence training programs in the Commonwealth. Some of the individuals in the training programs were assigned by random assignment, some were volunteers, and some were individuals identified as priorities for training and were required to participate by their respective agencies. The mixed design addressed two important issues. An experimental component allowed for more rigorous assessment of the project outcomes. A quasi-experimental component allowed individuals for whom training was identified as a priority to still receive expedited training. The use of volunteers also allowed examining the effects of the program on a large segment of the most common recipients of such training.

The priority and volunteer subjects in the training programs were identified by the agencies doing the training. They entered the program by the procedures designated by the agency in its original funding proposal. This minimized testing effects of the evaluation on the training program and allowed it to more closely resemble the "natural setting" in which such training programs take place. This also reduced disruption of the program and burden to the agency resulting from the evaluation.

The project tried to assign some individuals to the training using a random assignment process as part of the requirements for evaluation of the programs. Procedures for assignment were discussed with technical assistance from the National Institute of Justice team to insure a process that was workable and that would promote acceptance by the agencies. Both agencies agreed to cooperate with the evaluation, but there was a significant need to devise procedures that were perceived by them as fair, equitable, and not contrary to agency or programmatic objectives. Obstacles raised by these challenges undermined the ability to randomly assign training subjects.

Because of the expected experimental component, data collection was only planned post-intervention. This also reduced respondent and agency burdens and more closely simulated a typical assessment and monitoring process for such programs. The obstacles that prevented

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complete random assignment, however, did not mean we could switch to a pre- post-test or longitudinal design. Advantages of a post-test only data collection included less disruption of the programs, allowing the project access, and the accommodation of available resources. These points were great enough that they prevented use of alternative designs that could better cope with non-random assignment. As noted earlier, when an experimental protocol breaks down, an experimental design is difficult to reconfigure.

Measurement

Refinement of measurement tools for evaluating these programs was an important element of this study. Focus groups with the advisory committee and representatives of the programs clarified the extent to which measures of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors were needed. The current more general measures were also used, despite their obvious deficiencies, to allow contrasting results between them and more refined measures. This allowed the current study to build on other research and identify implications for other projects using the more general measures.

Evaluation Results

The project produced two special reports (Kohl, Brensilber & Holmes, 1995; Holmes & Headley, 1995). These special reports detailed the evaluation findings for the two training projects. They discussed the evaluation methodology, strategies for enhancing a state's evaluative capacity, and integration of findings into the planning process. The special reports summarize training needs identified by the several programs evaluated, strategies that met those needs, obstacles to successful training, and methods for reducing those obstacles. They also recommended modifications to existing training programs to make them more effective. The two special reports are included in the appendices to this report.

All data sets created as part of this evaluation project will be provided to NIJ in machine readable form with documentation. They will conform to the Data Resources Program Handbook requirements of the National Institute of Justice and are available to other researchers for secondary analysis. Copies of the data and the evaluation instruments are also available from the Massachusetts Statistical Analysis Center in the Executive Office of Public Safety Programs Division.

Training Results

Both training programs attempted to modify knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of the trainees. The specialized reports on each project clearly indicate that knowledge transfer did occur. Officers and other trainees became more aware of laws and regulations governing their actions in the area of training. They learned about background circumstances that may have contributed to the situation to which they were responding (such as Alzheimer's Disease contributing to elder abuse and sexism contributing to domestic violence). Many of the officers reported changes in their attitudes regarding domestic violence as a result of the training experience. Similarly, participants indicated their intent to change their behavior.

The enhanced evaluation procedures indicated the results of behavioral change. The number of elder abuse reports filed by police to elder protective service agencies increased after the training. The number of domestic violence incidents identified by police also increased. It is less clear whether these behavioral changes persisted or faded across time. The short duration of follow-up did not allow determining whether this was a seasonal fluctuation, a random variation, or a meaningful drop. Even if there was some fading of behavior, however, the level of reporting for both projects remained considerably higher at the end of the study than at the beginning. Whether the behavioral change will continue, fade, or increase will likely depend on whether there is follow-up reinforcing these changes.

Qualitative information from the projects also suggested behavioral changes occurred. Many officers reported changing their behavior in follow-up interviews. Service agencies received an increase in referrals and greater cooperation from the law enforcement community. Project coordinators also reported changes in officer's behavior. The qualitative reports from these diverse sources presented a picture consistent with the quantitative data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improved Training

The trainers employed tactics to reduce obstacles to changing knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. These tactics improved knowledge delivery, attitude change, and behavioral modification.

To strengthen knowledge delivery they used

◊ A planned curriculum; and

◊ Validated information tests.

Attitude change appeared more likely when participants were

◊ Encouraged to express their opinions freely, especially differing ones; and

◊ Exposed to people with direct experience in working with the victims or to victims themselves.

Learning new behaviors was encouraged by

◊ Role playing the desired behaviors.

These recommendations for improved training are not new innovations. In the press of program development and operation, however, they are easy to bypass or overlook. Trainers of domestic

violence programs need to periodically step back from the process and review what they are doing and assess whether these tactics may help them improve their training.

Improved Evaluations

Some of the major obstacles to evaluation were created by the speed with which the training was implemented. It was difficult at times for the evaluators to keep up with new developments in the projects. Several tactics are suggested for dealing with these problems.

◊   Fast tracking the evaluation;

◊   Building on existing instruments; and

◊   Employing utilization of focused techniques.

Fast tracking the evaluation means that evaluators have to plan ahead for alternative contingencies. Change in these projects is inevitable. Alternative adaptations of design, measures, and data collection should be started before some of these changes occur. This may seem a waste of resources initially, but an entire evaluation can be compromised if some changes are not responded to quickly and appropriately.

This recommendation may seem at odds with use of complex, yet powerful, experimental designs. An effective experiment needs control over the intervention and consistent implementation. On the other hand, if an experimenter does not anticipate and plan for potential threats to the experimental protocol, the entire experiment can collapse. The breakdown of random assignment in this evaluation has shown that potential. This recommendation does not oppose experiments. It does say that the experiments must be able to deal with a potentially changing environment. Even when experiments have a breakdown of protocol, they can still be designed to produce useful information.

Considerable time was devoted to measurement issues. Using existing instruments is perfectly fine, as long as the authors are given credit. Indeed, the findings become more powerful because they can be compared to prior studies that used the borrowed instruments. Using other's measures also allows developing a stock of instruments that can be rapidly adapted to new circumstances. It supports development of fast tracking procedures.

Ever since Michael Patton published Utilization Focused Evaluation (1976) there has been support for working with stakeholders to identify how the evaluation may meet their needs for information. Some positive feedback was given the evaluation for information it provided, but it was not entirely successful in using these tactics. A major problem with the police training evaluation derived from the difficulty in addressing the diverse information needs of the training project. It is a challenge to employ these tactics, but their benefits can be great.

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