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NIJ RESEARCH-PRACTITIONER PARTNERSHIPS: EVALUATION OF GRANTS TO ENCOURAGE ARREST POLICIES FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Final Report Summary
GRANT 1998-WE-VX-KC12

Submitted to the State College
Police Department
and
The National Institute of Justice

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FINAL REPORT *Adeline*
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This report summarizes the results from a process evaluation of the State College Police Department's "Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies for Domestic Violence" project, funded between 1998 and 2000. The process evaluation was designed to correspond with the first 18 months of the State College Police Department grant. Funded as a "Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships" grant, the evaluation was based on a long-term collaborative relationship between the researcher and practitioners.

The State College Police Department included the following in its project goals: *expansion of county-wide mandatory arrest policies; updating and expansion of domestic-violence training; improvement of case tracking and service to victims; and centralization/coordination of efforts by police, prosecution, probation/parole, and judiciary in handling domestic-violence cases.*

In order to achieve these goals, the department's proposal called for the creation of four specialized positions: a *Domestic-violence Arrest Coordinator/Officer* from within the State College Police Department; a *Safety Audit Coordinator* from the Centre County Women's Resource Center; a *Victims Service Attorney* from the MidPenn Legal Services; and an *Intensive Domestic-Violence Probation Officer* from the Centre County Probation and Parole Department.

The creation of new positions was expected to not only increase awareness, knowledge, collaboration, and communication among experts but also to establish a "core group of designated experts." Providing training to first responders in the criminal justice-system, and to related agencies -- such as 911, clerical court staff, and personnel in medical emergency rooms -- was expected to expand the level of knowledge and expertise to other key responders and support staff as well. Further, the police department's project was intended to increase documentation and communication with expected results of improving cases and increasing offender accountability.

In summary, the goals of the process evaluation were to assess how and to what extent the State College Police Department's proposed activities were implemented as planned, based on the rationale that such activities would enhance the potential for increasing victim safety and perpetrator accountability systemically. It also assessed forums for collaborative partnering among practitioner agencies: the Safety-Audit Team and the Systems Coordination Team. The project was expected to measure indicators of increased safety and accountability as set forth in project goals and objectives.

This evaluation, as a process model, was not designed to test whether the proposed activities actually increased victim safety and perpetrator accountability. Nevertheless, the precise activities proposed for the process evaluation were intended to provide the potential for future impact studies.

Specifically, the process evaluation evaluated goals and objectives of the State College "Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies" proposal under its four target areas: **Training**, **Tracking/Monitoring**, **Safety Audit**, and **Services for Victims**. Within each target area, the following specific activities were completed and are described in this final report:

- **Training:** the evaluation conducted pre-/post-training assessments of all personnel trained during the first year of the evaluation; conducted follow-up surveys of trained personnel to assess long-term impact of training; and evaluated other educational orientations and activities planned by the State College Police Department project.
- **Tracking/Monitoring:** the evaluation completed a technical assistance project for key practitioners and the evaluator; worked with practitioners to assess development of newly-

created positions to better serve domestic-violence victims; evaluated performance of personnel in these positions to provide direct services to victims or perpetrators; and examined activities associated with the development of a systemwide, inter-agency data base.

- **Safety Audit:** the evaluation collaborated with the newly-hired Safety Audit Coordinator to assess completion of a safety audit within Centre County; evaluate the outcome of the safety audit by the end of the evaluation period; and track achievements of the Safety Audit Coordinator to establish a domestic-violence case management team.
- **Services for Victims:** the evaluation completed focus-group meetings with domestic-violence victims served by the State College Police Department, the county legal-services agency, and the local women's shelter to document their own views and perspectives on county services for victims. Focus-group meetings addressed a variety of issues in order to shed light on coordinated approaches toward service provision from the experiences of these women.

The final report is divided into six chapters. Chapters are ordered according to the target areas, the technical assistance project, and final thoughts on researcher-practitioner partnerships.

The process evaluation relied on collaboration with numerous professionals in Centre County at a number of different levels. The primary researcher-practitioner partnership was with the State College Police Department but included agencies with personnel hired in newly-created positions, and the Directors of those agencies.

Training

The process evaluation assessed law-enforcement, domestic-violence training at a number of levels during the 18-month evaluation period. Assessment included pre- and post-training and follow-up evaluation of two groups of law enforcement.

Pre-/post-training assessments. Findings from this training evaluation provide strong evidence for the value of law-enforcement and non-law-enforcement domestic violence training. Participants exhibited increased change in knowledge from the pre- to post-training period, and they responded positively to a great deal of new information associated with commonly-held myths and beliefs. Further, respondents on training surveys offered thoughtful insight into other topics pertinent to training, such as frustrating and satisfying aspects of working with domestic-violence incidents. Results reinforce the value of pre- and post-training assessments by documenting knowledge level of participants coming into training in addition to measuring change in knowledge and attitudes/beliefs from training. At the same time, results from pre- and post-training are realistic in that, clearly, some topics are more complex than others and certain beliefs associated with handling domestic-violence cases are deep-rooted.

One of the greatest benefits to derive from examining attitudes and beliefs at both pre- and post-training relates to identifying and isolating areas for further investigation and inquiry. Respondents provide great insight into areas of learning, which may require different approaches or more advanced instruction. Some potential analysis of data was beyond the scope of this evaluation; nevertheless, findings summarized shed light on all of these dimensions and perspectives toward change in beliefs and attitudes.

Participants also gave positive feedback on the curriculum and instructors, and they feel strongly

about mandatory training of law enforcement in domestic violence. Respondents experience satisfaction and frustration from their work, which they thoughtfully convey in qualitative comments.

Follow-up assessments. While the pre- and post-training assessments show promising results for both the short-term impact of training and high response rate of participants in training, attempts to gather follow-up data have been challenging and disappointing. The data that are produced from follow-up surveys do, indeed, reinforce the value and importance of this kind of long-term assessment. Respondents document feedback that is not possible or appropriate immediately following training, yet the poor response rate precludes drawing generalizations to date.

Tracking and Monitoring

New positions. The researcher-practitioner partnership process evaluation was organized to review tracking and monitoring into three distinct levels for the purposes of assessment. The first level focused on monitoring the development of newly-created positions. The second level focused on documentation of achievements made by persons in newly-created positions; and the third level encompassed specific target areas set forth in the State College proposal, which includes systems tracking and monitoring across agencies.

Descriptive analysis of data retrieved provided valuable insight into time and issues linked with development of newly-created, specialized positions. Evidence is clear that newly-hired professionals have extensive duties over and above services for victims or perpetrators. Practitioners in the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies project spend a substantial amount of their time in work related to their new positions over and above providing services/supervision to victims and perpetrators. Such responsibilities are undoubtedly linked to job performance and proficiency; nevertheless, for the most part, productivity is traditionally measured primarily in terms of "victims/perpetrators served," without recognition of the immense energy expended in related tasks.

Further, it is noteworthy that all four persons spend considerable time in agency-specific tasks not related to their new positions. It is critical to examine the amount of time spent on these kinds of tasks because it will inevitably impact on overall performance and productivity of newly-funded positions.

Direct services. While it is essential that practitioners and funding agencies gain better understanding of establishment and implementation of new specialized positions themselves, the ultimate question remains: What do these positions accomplish and achieve?

The intent of tracking services for victims and supervision of perpetrators, then, is to document systematically what needs these persons require from the time of initial contact level; and to compile a comprehensive picture of services provided by practitioners from across the system. In doing so, it is also possible to examine duplication or overlap in services provided by practitioners in different agencies, and to identify possible gaps in service. Equally important, tracking the work of individual practitioners, as they provide direct services to victims or supervision of perpetrators, lays the groundwork for designing systemwide tracking as well.

The development of tracking data base systems for practitioners hired to provide intensive services to victims or perpetrators produced valuable information. First, tracking documented the breadth of services, which law enforcement, legal services, and probation and parole become involved in.

When victims turn to police or legal services for help, they frequently have numerous needs indirectly related to their abuse. Critical decisions associated with separation from the abusive partner, advice, safety plans, and assurance are just a few examples of services that may branch off from filing of protection from abuse, for instance. Second, tracking reveals the distinct services practitioners provide, with very little overlap or duplication. Third, tracking verifies the long-term commitment of practitioners, as noted in the length of time practitioners work with victims from initial to closing contact. Tracking of supervision by the Domestic-Violence Probation Officer sheds light on critical variables associated with the perpetrator -- from prior history with same or different victims to trends in crimes and sentencing and characteristics of abusers.

Tracking of new positions and service provision has substantiated the tremendous responsibilities of these practitioners in carrying out their mandates.

Systemwide data base. The process evaluation proposal included plans for collaboration with partner practitioners to assess development of a systemwide domestic-violence data base in State College/Centre County. Specific goals were to develop systems that could track cases from initiation on to outcome through the court process. Over the course of the evaluation period, several steps took place that could lead incrementally to the development of a systemwide data base. There now exists the capability of tracking victims and perpetrators across key points in systems from the time of initial contact to final disposition.

Technical assistance project. One of the first projects planned under the evaluation project was the completion of the Technical Assistance Project. The site for the project was the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (DVERT) project in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The intent of this project was to send a team of practitioners and the researcher to a well-established, long-term multi-agency domestic violence project. There were several goals and objectives in mind when planning this technical-assistance-project site-visit to a nationally recognized model program, which included: gaining familiarity and exposure to a complex, multi-agency domestic violence project that would highlight both similarities and differences of Centre County initiatives; gaining an understanding of challenges faced and resolved at DVERT that could be useful for Centre County's own efforts and innovations; and assessing the feasibility of applying some "lessons learned" to the "Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies" project.

Participants in the Technical Assistance Project learned a great deal about the DVERT project in Colorado Springs and were extremely thoughtful in their reviews of DVERT in relationship to the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies project in State College. Clearly, these participants believe that there are many aspects of the DVERT model that could be modified and adopted in Centre County. Participants also recognize that there are components of DVERT that may not be desirable or feasible locally. Further, they are keenly aware of challenges and dilemmas which many proposed changes would evoke.

Safety Audit and Case Management

Evaluation of this third major component of the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies focused on several areas: the position of the Safety Audit Coordinator; the safety-audit model used to conduct the audit; safety-audit team membership and representation; training of the safety audit team; tracking work and progress of the safety audit team; outcome/products of the audit by the end of the process evaluation project; and summary and conclusion from the safety-audit component of the process evaluation. Finally, there was a review of activities associated with the Case Management Team during the course of the evaluation period. Assessment was based primarily on review of resource materials, participation in training and meetings, and personal interactions with

the coordinator during the one-year period of evaluation. Analysis was qualitative and descriptive.

Process evaluation of the Safety Audit produced a number of interesting and significant findings, that could be captured under the following themes: *team composition, training, partnerships, outcome, evaluation, and victim safety.*

Team composition. A decision was made when the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies project was funded to create a core safety-audit team made up primarily of representatives from practitioner partners in the grant. The vast majority of members, then, had full-time responsibilities for direct services to victims or supervision of perpetrators, in addition to work on the safety audit. Time was limited for these professionals because of the great demands placed on them.

The team decided that it would sometimes be inappropriate for a member to take part directly in a site visit because of his/her professional affiliation. Further, in this initial year of auditing, the decision was made to focus on the criminal-justice system. These two decisions combined had an impact on what two members of the audit team could do, which in turn affected the work of others. These issues raise the question of how team composition can impact on work of a safety audit team and, ultimately, its outcome.

Training. The training facilitator indicated that there are different models of training programs for conducting safety audits. From the perspective of process and outcome, there were numerous areas associated with conducting safety audits that could reasonably be covered in training, and that could logically affect final products and recommendations. It is this evaluator's belief that variation in training methods could produce very different findings. Guidelines for ascertaining whether adequate information has been gathered through interviews or review of files can assist auditors greatly.

Partnerships. Assessment of the safety audit provided this evaluator the unique opportunity to observe and document on-going interactions among key practitioner partners in the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies project. The strong commitment of the coordinator and team members to collaborate was evident. The coordinator solicited feedback and approval from her fellow team members for all formal communications prepared during the evaluation period. Further, the coordinator relied on the expertise of the training facilitator throughout the evaluation period, which also demonstrated commitment to conducting the most sound, valid audit feasible. Evidence of a strong practitioner partnership pervaded throughout this evaluator's review of the audit team. Developing and sustaining viable partnerships, and decision making based on consensus, is costly, however, and can impact on time needed to complete set goals.

Outcome. By the end of the first year, visits had occurred in four sites. It was outside the scope of this process evaluation to compare accomplishments during this time period to audits conducted elsewhere.

Evaluation. Clearly, the process evaluation of the safety audit raised concerns and questions for team members. They were concerned about how information from meetings would be recorded and how their anonymity/confidentiality would be protected. In retrospect, it would have been useful to interview team members late in the evaluation period about their own views toward goals and accomplishments to date.

Victims safety. The thrust of a safety accountability audit is, of course, to examine how victim access points either do or do not protect victim safety and perpetrator accountability

institutionally. Asking victims about their views would provide the most critical insight into victim safety and perpetrator accountability pertinent to any given site. Given the requests to solicit insight from the perspectives of victim experts (made by practitioners and VAWO/NIJ) in the process evaluation, inclusion of women in a safety audit seems particularly appropriate. By the end of the evaluation period, input from survivors had not taken place.

Case management team. Establishing a case-management team was another responsibility of the Safety Audit Coordinator. At the onset of the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies project and this process evaluation, there was some debate among practitioners about how to proceed with the case management team component of the project. Some practitioners expressed desire to reach consensus on developing a team approach for reviewing individual domestic-violence cases. Others were concerned about confidentiality and safety of victims with the implementation of this case-management design. They leaned toward development of a systems approach toward case management rather than an individual-case approach.

By the end of the evaluation period, the systems-coordination team and meetings were still in initial stage of development. Realistically, the development of systems coordination in this county will emerge over time as participants consider format, function, consensus building, and long-term goals and objectives. This process evaluation was in progress for only six months of activities. In this short time, however, there is evidence that formalizing systems coordination is very complex and time-consuming, even when participants have a long history of collaboration and negotiation.

Services for Victims

The evaluation project included collaboration with practitioners in reaching out to and hearing from women victims, themselves, through participation in confidential focus groups.

Focus-group meetings. The two focus-group meetings were held with a very small number of women identified and solicited by practitioners. They completed surveys as well. Prevailing thoughts and perspectives emerging from focus-group meeting reflected many of those themes identified with an initial pilot group. Because of the low volume of women participants, their views cannot be generalized to victims in Centre County, PA.

Women were extremely provocative in their thoughts about domestic violence generally. They described the evolution of violence relationships which develop so incrementally that victims may not identify their relationship as abusive. They also differentiate emotional abuse from physical abuse and the particular challenges faced by women who experience the former. Women have questions about laws and criteria used by some police officers and judges in cases of emotional abuse. They believe that greater burdens are placed on victims of emotional abuse to substantiate emotional abuse because there are no bruises or physical injuries. They wonder about discretionary power of judges in these cases.

Women described a number of ways in which they feel lack of support and/or appreciation for the seriousness of abuse -- not just of themselves, but **particularly for their children** who may live with and have been witnesses of violence. They described children witnessing violence; lack of concern about relationship of domestic violence when establishing custody and visitation; and inconsistencies in behavior related to possession of weapons in domestic violence situations.

Women had more varied experiences with police than with either the courts or victims services. Women spoke highly about certain departments and individuals within those departments. Overall, women described diverse experiences in individual officers from the same and different

departments. Some women included police services with those of legal services and victims services when they talked about being highly supportive, believed, understood. Experiences in the local hospital were mixed as well. A few women talked about inconsistencies in the way abuse was handled --- or even asked about -- by medical personnel in emergency rooms.

Independent of perspectives toward specific agencies in the system, women repeatedly turned toward their children. Obviously, these victims feel strongly that their children suffer from abuse of their mothers, that this trauma is long-lasting, and that much more attention needs to be paid to custody and visitation in domestic-violence cases.

The relatively small number of women who participated in focus groups generated a wealth of information and insight into the scope of domestic violence in their lives. They identified individuals and agencies from whom they have consistently received strong positive support, those from whom they have had mixed experiences, and those from whom they have perceived lack of support overall. Across all topics, women identified myriad ways in which systems can support them -- from emotional and psychological support to concrete needs like housing and affordable child care.

While the low volume of victim participants in this evaluation is disappointing, it is nevertheless important to examine thoughts of women who did agree to express their views. The information expressed by victims in different settings/forums gives powerful testimony of women served by partner agencies. The variation in responses of these few women may have changed with higher numbers of responses; however, the diversity represented serves to document the tremendous impact and scope of victimization. The pain and suffering experienced by women who are abused clearly goes far beyond that of immediate injuries. It encompasses shame and fear of disclosing, concern for others who will be affected; and courage to work with a system they do not always feel supports and believes them.

Final Thoughts on Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships

Practitioner partners in the State College Police Department project represent some of the most dedicated and committed professionals in Pennsylvania. These professionals have also established firm goals for holding perpetrators accountable for their actions and have made great strides over the course of the last several years in achieving this difficult task. Partners have also worked tirelessly to collaborate and reach consensus on myriad complicated issues such as systemwide tracking, safety of victims, and confidentiality.

This process evaluation revealed a number of elements related to collaborative partnerships. Practitioners immediately faced the challenge of balancing cooperation with the evaluation and meeting obligations to victims. Commitment and time had a significant impact on data collection in this project as well. Practitioners were more than willing and interested in providing needed information for the evaluation but simply did not have time to meet requested deadlines.

Expectations about relationships between researchers and practitioner partners are relevant to scarcity of time as well. Researchers are inevitably focused on meeting deadlines and schedules, which could have considerable impact on the value of information gathered. Partnership evaluators cannot simply design a project that reasonably meets their own capability but must allow for the conflicting demands of practitioners on whom they rely. Further, partnership grants are funded in large part because of evidence that long-term relationships have existed between the researcher and practitioners. Some researchers have years' experience, themselves, as practitioners or have served as academics on task forces and community boards. Nevertheless, the relationship

inevitably changes when formal evaluation takes place.

This alteration raises questions for researchers who have been actively involved in decision making but may need to become more passive and observant during the evaluation period. Concerns are raised by practitioners, as well, as they are being observed in new and significant ways. Because of long-term relationships, researchers may also assume that practitioners have full trust and understanding about their roles or the very design of the evaluation project. The impact of these emerging dynamics is that additional time is needed to clarify gray areas and reach common ground in the most collaborative forums possible.

Finally, collaboration is a major task, in and of itself. This evaluation reinforced the critical need for funded resource staff to facilitate collaboration on an on-going basis. Consideration needs to be given to fund persons who facilitate collaboration throughout the funding periods.

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