

# **COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY-BASED AGENCIES TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**PRACTICE BRIEF**

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## PRACTICE BRIEF

### Why Collaborate

#### *Specialization*

Different governmental and community agencies have varying missions and goals that often overlap regarding the needs of a single client. Community supervision agencies are charged with ensuring public safety and officers are not necessarily experts in victims services, mental health substance abuse, child protection, housing, or any number of areas that affect clients. Collaborating with other community agencies allows our clients to be served effectively for all or most of their needs.

#### *Confidentiality*

Various policies, rules or laws governing confidentiality can protect client information in different ways. These regulations can be different depending on the type of agency. However, most community-based domestic violence service agencies have stricter rules around confidentiality than a community supervision agency that must report directly to the court. For example, many victim services agencies cannot even acknowledge that a client has used their services without written permission. This can be frustrating to supervision officers, but these client protections provide a layer of safety for the victim that is critical for well-being and it can be an asset for officers. Often clients under supervision cannot or will not share information related to IPV with officers for an array of reasons. Relationships with community partners allow officers to refer to agencies who they know can meet client needs and properly discuss options without the possible intervention of the court or violations of the orders and conditions of supervision. Supervision agencies may ask for a release to share information with community partners, however, it is critical to discuss this with clients first to assure there are no safety concerns.

## ***Resource and Service Accessibility***

Clients on supervision often have a wide variety of basic and unmet needs. Concerns about safety may affect their ability to leave or avoid an abusive partner or meet the terms of their supervision. Thus, it is important to ask clients what their needs and priorities are and how these might affect their supervision process. Community-based domestic violence advocacy agencies may have resources and programs that could help meet some of these needs and provide support to clients as requested.

However, many governmental and community-based agencies often have limited resources and cannot respond to all requests for assistance that they receive. However, close relationships with a wide variety of agencies can increase the chance of clients accessing a range of services in a timely manner as their safety needs arise.

## **Who To collaborate With**

### ***Domestic violence Advocacy Agencies (including state or local coalitions)***

A domestic violence advocate is a specially trained person that provides support to victims of domestic violence, helps victims understand their options, and provides referrals to additional services.

This support can include: 24-hour confidential hotline, emergency shelter, safety planning, support groups, and services for their children. Some domestic violence advocates can accompany victims of domestic violence to court, to the police station, to the emergency room, social services, or probation and parole offices to provide support on site.

These agencies will organize community education events like ‘Take Back the Night’ in which community corrections officers can participate and show their support. Domestic violence advocacy agencies can also provide training opportunities for officers. Some community corrections officers have arranged with victim service providers to attend the same initial 40-hour training that newly hired domestic violence advocates attend. Officers can come out of these trainings with a new understanding of the importance of their work. In addition, this may help supervising officers see beyond the client as an offender and more fully understand the impact of IPV in their clients’ lives.

Some community corrections departments ask their local domestic violence advocacy agency to provide training on victim interviewing, trauma-informed approaches to services, and other additional topics on the dynamics of domestic violence. In addition, supervising officers have had advocates watch pre-sentence investigations and be present for supervision reports to support the clients. As a result, practices such as this have led to better supervision, reduced victim blaming and collusion with abusive partners and stronger outcomes for survivors of domestic violence including successful completion of supervision.

## ***The National Domestic Violence Hotline***

- National Domestic Violence 24 Hour Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)
- National Deaf Hotline Videophone 9am-5pm: M-F 1-855-812-1001 or deafhelp@thehotline.org

## ***State, U.S. Territory, and Tribal Domestic Violence Coalitions***

- Domestic violence coalitions serve as statewide and territory-wide leaders in the efforts to end domestic violence. These not-for-profit organizations connect local domestic violence service providers and are valuable resources for information about services, programs, legislation, and policies that support survivors of domestic violence within their state or territory. State and territory coalitions can provide referrals and contact information for local domestic violence advocacy services in their respective state or territory.
- The National Network to End Domestic Violence maintains a list of state and territory domestic violence coalitions at the following link: <https://nnev.org/content/state-u-s-territory-coalitions/>
- U.S. Resource Map of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence and Tribal Coalitions: <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/local-resources>
- U.S. Resource Map of Crime Victim Services & Information <https://www.ovc.gov/map.html>

## ***Culturally-relevant Programs***

There is no singular perspective or approach for IPV. Any systemic approach to working with those affected by IPV must take into account the diverse backgrounds of those individuals. In addition, many ethnic, religious or cultural groups may have additional or more specific resources available that can ensure the safety of victims and their families while also providing resources to rebuild their lives. Below are some resources to learn more about how IPV affects certain communities and how to access local agencies:

- Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence: <https://www.api-gbv.org/>
- End Abuse of People with Disabilities: <https://www.endabusepwd.org/get-connected/>
- Faith Trust Institute: <https://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/>
- LGBT Community Center Directory: <https://www.lgbtcenters.org/LGBTCenters>
- National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL): <https://www.ncall.us>
- National Indigenous Women's Resource Center: <http://www.niwrc.org/>
- National Latin@ Network: <https://nationallatinonetwork.org/>
- National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community: <https://ujimacommunity.org>

## ***Judges***

Community supervision officers act as the eyes and ears of the court. Judges, however, are not just enforcers of conditions; they can be critical for setting clients up for success. This requires close collaboration with community supervision officers. Some conditions of supervision can, while well-meaning, can be barriers to client safety. For example, a judge ordering a client to not live with a partner can be dangerous if that partner is controlling or violent. The client may inadvertently be placed in a situation where they have to choose between their safety and complying with their orders and conditions of supervision. In such cases, the officer can support the client's safety by providing relevant information to the judge and asking for changes to supervision.

Community supervision agencies along with advocacy agencies can also help to educate judges more thoroughly on IPV. Here are several resources on judicial training and education:

- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges: <http://www.ncjfcj.org/our-work/FVDR>
- Center for Court Innovation: <https://www.courtinnovation.org/areas-of-focus/domestic-violence>
- National Center for State Courts: <https://www.ncsc.org/Topics/Children-Families-and-Elders/Domestic-Violence/Resource-Guide.aspx>
- See if your state has a bench book for IPV.

## ***Police***

Police are the eyes and ears of the community through the lens of public safety, and they may have ongoing relationships with clients under supervision, their families and other community members. As such, they are critical in ensuring both the safety and compliance of supervisees. Police can benefit from having more information regarding community supervision's roles, powers, and oversight of those under supervision. This allows police to interact more effectively with situations involving domestic violence. Many police departments may have specialized DV squads or caseloads that may have extra resources for protecting clients who are victims of domestic violence. Additionally, collaboration can lead to more useful and effective police reports from the field that can lead to more accurate analysis of client risk. Community supervision officers can request to go on ride-alongs or sit in on trainings at the police department and police can do likewise at community supervision agencies. Resources on police training and education include:

- International Association of Chiefs of Police- VAW Response Resources: <https://www.theiacp.org/projects/police-response-to-violence-against-women-vaw>
- National Sheriff's Association- DV Training Courses: <http://www.sheriffs.org/programs/domestic-violence-crime-victim-services/training>

## Social Service Agencies

Communities contain a wide variety of services that may be able to work with clients under supervision as well as during reentry or other emergency situations. Some service agencies may be known primarily for a single service (i.e. mental health) but also provide some services or referrals for basic needs (i.e. clothing, housing, employment, etc.). Additionally, some faith communities or culturally specific agencies may also provide a multitude of services for their members or the wider community. Knowing these resources can be a boon to officers trying to get clients on their feet and successfully complete supervision. Below are examples of different types of social services programs:

General Reentry	Housing Programs	Basic Needs
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reentry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food</li> </ul>
Substance Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex Offender Accessible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing assistance</li> </ul>
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability Housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utility assistance</li> </ul>
Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Living Options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation</li> </ul>
Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Shelters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holidays</li> </ul>
Employment & Education		

In order to learn more about resources in your area, there are two telephone short codes regulated by the [Federal Communications Commission \(FCC\)](#) and available 24/7.

**211** is a repository for community services and programs operated by the United Way. Resources are also searchable online at <http://www.211.org/>.

**311** is a repository for non-emergency municipal government services. Because it is government specific, it is not available in all communities or for rural areas.

## How to Collaborate

There are several strategies to build collaborations between community corrections professionals, domestic violence advocates, criminal justice system professionals, and social services agencies. Collaborations can be informal or formal processes as follows:

### *Informal Collaboration*

#### **Informal networking**

Reach out to counterparts at other agencies and invite them for coffee or lunch. Use this time to introduce yourself, discuss the work you each do, and how you can collaborate.

### **In-service presentations**

Some community agencies have ongoing lunch-and-learns or brown bag lunches. For example, once a month, probation, victim services and intervention providers can meet for pizza to discuss issues pertaining to policies, hypothetical cases, community issues, and potential grant opportunities.

### **Reentry councils**

In the last decade, communities across the country have formed reentry councils to bring together different agencies that work with reentering individuals. If victim services organizations are not already participating in these meetings, it is important to invite them to the table as so many cases involve or have a history of domestic violence.

### **Specialty courts or dockets**

Many communities have specialty courts to target populations with specific needs like substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, and/or veterans. Many of these court populations, however, have overlapping needs. Cross-training between these courts, community corrections, domestic violence service providers, and social services organizations can increase the effectiveness of client plans.

### **Referrals**

Community corrections officers who have knowledge of individual service providers increase the likelihood that clients will engage with those services. It is important for officers to personalize the referral process by either sending clients to particular individuals or providing a ‘warm handoff’. Below are scripted examples of conducting a warm handoff with a client:

#### ***Immediate Referral***

***Probation Officer to Client:*** I’m worried about you and I want you to know there are people at (insert name of program), the domestic violence advocacy program that can talk with you at any time. They know a lot about resources in the community and want to do what they can to help you. I know Advocate really well and she’s great to talk to. Do you mind if I call her right now?

***Probation Officer to Advocate on the phone:*** I have someone here with me in my office, and I’ve been telling her about your program. Is it true that your services are free? Do you keep information confidential? If she’s interested would you be able to talk with her? I can hand over the phone and leave the room so you two can talk privately.

***Client to Probation Officer:*** ok.

***\*Probation Officer Hands Phone to Client\****

### ***Delayed Referral***

***Client to Probation Officer:*** I don't want to talk now. Is there another time I could do this?

***Probation Officer to Client:*** Is there another time that would be better for you to talk to Advocate?

***Client to Probation Officer:*** I could at 7:00 tonight.

***Probation Officer to Advocate:*** Can Client give you a call at 7:00 tonight?

***Advocate to Probation Officer:*** Yes, that's good. I can talk then. Can you make sure she has my phone number?

***Probation Officer to Advocate:*** Yes, I will.

***Probation Officer to Client:*** Yes, Advocate can talk with you at 7:00 tonight. She wants to make sure you have her phone number. Here it is.

### ***Formal Collaboration***

#### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Agreement (MOA)**

An MOU/MOA can be useful to define what types of information can be shared between agencies and under what circumstances. Some community corrections departments have even contracted with victim services to complete some of the tasks needed to enhance safety. Having MOU/MOAs can help define each partner's roles and responsibilities and ensure that these relationships remain stable despite turnover or promotions in the agencies.

#### **Coordinated Community Response (CCR)**

A coordinated community response, sometimes referred to as "The Duluth Model," offers a method for communities to coordinate their responses through policy and practice to better address the complex issues around domestic violence. It is an inter-agency approach that brings the criminal and civil justice and human service interventions together around the primary goal of protecting victims from ongoing abuse.

A coordinated community response driven from probation or community corrections should engage both criminal and civil legal systems and a multitude of community organizations that can address the needs of victims including those under community supervision. Most CCRs work to create a distinctive form of organized public responses to domestic violence. It is characterized by:

- Clearly identifiable and largely shared assumptions and theories about domestic violence and effective means to deter it.
- Empirically tested intervention strategies that build safety and accountability into all elements of the infrastructure of processing cases of violence.
- Well-defined methods of inter-agency cooperation guided by advocacy programs.

Community supervision can address the safety and criminogenic needs of the probationer by coordinating in ways that enhance their capacity. From a policy standpoint the community supervision office would be aided by an MOU where the community supervision office agrees to comply fully with inter-agency agreements.

The Blueprint for Safety: <https://praxisinternational.org/blueprint-home/blueprint-materials/>

Arrowhead Regional Corrections, Duluth Office: Procedures for Domestic Violence Related Cases: <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/8-Duluth-Pretrial-Probation-Chapter-7.pdf>

## **Conclusion**

Individuals experiencing IPV often have complex needs that are beyond the capacity or expertise of community supervision agencies. Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of these individuals requires a community response in coordination with supervision. There is, however, no singular way to collaborate with other agencies. Some communities benefit from informal working relationships between agencies while other communities are able to form complex and coordinated formal partnerships. It is important to find the means that works most effectively in your own community.