

Praxis International - *Rural Technical Assistance on Violence Against Women*
Risk and Danger: Helping to "connect the dots"
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with Denise Eng, Praxis International, Blueprint for Safety, Connie Sponsler-Garcia, BWJP
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Hello everyone. Welcome to this rule building blocks webinar. Offered by Praxis International and the office on violence against women. The webinars feature the components of affection -- advocacy that improve outcomes for victims and accountability for offenders. These trainings are intended to provide in-depth perspective and thinking on relevant issues from national and world experts in the field. I am Liz Carlson. I am the program specialist here at Praxis, absolute office. I'm thrilled that you are able to join us today for our session. Today's topic is risk and danger. Helping practitioners to connect the dots. To get you oriented to that session, I would like to see that our summary for today's topic is when practitioners in the criminal justice system attend to -- purposes for victims and intervenors. Their data -- disadvantaged by system that has historically not gathered, interpreted and disseminate information in a coordinated way. Overtime CCR across the country have been working to address the system's inability to connect the dots. So, with that, I would like to just say I am thrilled to be joined by our speakers today. Connie is with us today from BW JP. She is the training and technical assistant manager there. Hello Connie. Welcome.

Thank you. Welcome.

And my coworker, and our St. Paul office, is Denise. She is a program manager of the blueprint for safety project here at Praxis. And so, Denny's, either?

I am here. Thank you. It is great to be here with everybody.

Thank you to both of you. So, as I said, Denny's is a program manager here for the blueprint for safety project. Denny's brings to Praxis three decades of experience in advocacy for battered women. I merely as a legal -- primarily as a legal advocate but also she has expertise in institutional change about community available. She co-managed and developed the St. Paul blueprint for safety in 2008 through 2010. She now manages the blueprint for safety demonstration initiative of Praxis as well as provides technical assistance and institutional analysis to communities throughout the country. Connie is with us from BW JP is a training and technical assistant manager she has been training on the use of risk assessment models and tools for about 10 years. She has been an advocate and she has expertise in domestic violence and sexual assault, commercial sexual excitation issue brings also about 30 years of experience in direct services, program development, systems, institutional change, fundraising and ministration of victim services programs. You have come to the right place, all of you who are logged in today for this webinar. Connie and Denise have a well of expertise to share with all of us today. So before I turn the session over to Denise I would like to touch briefly on a few tips that we always like to pass along to our participants for how to have a good webinar.

If there are any of you who are participating in this session today by telephone only and you are not logged into the webinar portion of the phone lines will be muted for the entirety of the session. The way in which you will be able to offer your questions and comments to share with the group will be through email. So you should send a note to Liz at Liz@PraxisInternational.org whether it is a comment or technical issue use that email address. For the rest of us that are logged in and participating in the webinar itself I will refer your eye down to the lower left-hand portion of the screen where you will see the chat box for this session. That will be a very convenient and accessible way for you to share your thinking with us today. I will keep an eye on it throughout our session. I will do my best to get your comments and questions woven into the dialogue between Connie and Denise. So don't be shy. That is available to you at any point.

If you would like to chat in a quick hello or tell us where you are participating from today whether or not you have colleagues that are joining you on this session, feel free to use that chat box now. There is a public tab and you will be chatting to the whole group. It's always good to get the orientation of who we are all together with. If you happen to have an issue that you would like to chat privately with myself or one of our speakers you will notice a tab this is

private. If you open that out there is a list of pre-dispense and speakers. Double-click on one of the individuals listed there and that will open up a private communication between you and that person. That is available to you throughout our session today as well.

If you happen to get disconnected either for your telephone connection with webinar connection simply rejoined through your original process. We always like to let you know that this session is recorded and will be posted on the roll archive page of the Praxis International website. So it will get posted there tomorrow. Feel free to revisit it with your colleagues who perhaps are not able to join us today.

So, with that, I would like to just remind you all that yesterday for all of the registered users, participants for this session, I sent emails about -- and about six resources that hopefully you all received that ranged from training the most to practitioner slides on risk and danger to also some checklists that BW JP has put together. If there are any of you on the session now that don't have those materials feel free to send a note to Liz at Praxis International to Liz@PraxisInternational.org. I will than those off to you. That will be our foundation for our session today.

With that I'm going to ask Denise to go ahead and get us started.

Thank you, Liz. Once again I am happy to be here today. I am here to talk with you today about the way in which risk and danger is integrated in the project that Praxis began in partnership with the city of St. Paul and is now working on other communities around the world -- country to implement that became known as the blueprint for safety. Identifying, capturing, acting upon, disseminating information about risk and danger is really fundamental about with the blueprint organizes workers to do within the criminal legal system.

And QPR folks on the line who don't over the blueprint is where aren't familiar with it, the blueprint is a comprehensive approach to domestic violence criminal case processing. It has a set of policies for each of seven different agencies that handle domestic violence cases. With policies and protocols and all sorts of ways of guiding workers to respond in domestic violence cases. And yet at the same time we actually think of the blueprint not as a set of policies but as a single comprehensive policy because it is a way of bringing everybody together, linking everybody up, getting everybody on the same page and changing the way people work together to handle these cases and one of the ways in which they do that is how they handle the question of risk and danger.

I want to say that -- will talk about the blueprint but I want to be clear that we're not necessarily promoting the blueprint today and think communities should take a. This is an example that we have developed here at Praxis about how folks can look at this question of risk and danger.

We have notice for a long time that I think those of us who work in the field have known for a long time that not all domestic violence cases are the same. You don't carry the same set of risks, the context in which violence occurs is that. And yet there is a tendency when the criminal justice system takes the cases of to give the same sort of response. We lump in whole bunch of things together into this domestic violence bucket that are necessarily the same kind of thing. We treat them in pretty much the same way. I think we have developed this understanding over time that is not the most helpful approach that we could take. In addition, at about the same time over the last several years there have been a significant body of research that has been developed into what makes domestic violence cases dangerous.

There is a whole body of research that now exist that can help to guide workers in figuring this out.

We think this is really important because, of course, we want to use that information to identify and contain dangerous offenders the other side of the coin, we want to make sure that when it is not called for that we are not having state interventions intruding deeply into people when it is not really needed.

Of course want to provide some guidance for practitioners who are using scarce resources to try to figure out how to direct them. So that is why this whole notion risk and danger is important. And what it is that we -- white as we are here today to talk about this.

You should have received an email from this, a document that we call practitioner's guide to risk and danger in

domestic violence cases. This was developed when we did the blueprint, when we had a team of researchers advising us about what kind of interventions were helpful and what were the features in a domestic violence situation that can make a case more or less dangerous.

I'm going to talk a little bit about what is on the practitioner's guide. And then how to use it in a little bit.

So if you look at the practitioner's guide that you received an email you can see that along one side there is a little list of ways in which the guide is intended to be used.

It guides workers to elicit from victims particular kinds of information to document, to engage in discussions with victims, to communicate what it is they're finding to other workers, to be attentive to the factors they are uncovering and using your judgment along with what you uncover to make decisions about how to process cases, recognizing risk dangers are variable and can change. The importance of linking with advocates and that sort of thing. There is this list of ways in which the guide is intended to be used.

On the right side of the column you can see a list of acts or threats of violence that are associated with risk and lethality. These are actions that are taken by the offender that are associated with increased risk of continued violence or even dangerous or lethal violence. The way that we put this site together if you see some of these points are italicized, those points that are italicized those of the research tells us or associated with risk of potentially lethal violence. The others that are not italicized tended to be associated with risk of dangerous violence or continued violence.

And an on the other side of the practitioner's guide you will see another list that talks about the accompanying circumstances surrounding the relationship or the situation that can indicate risk or danger.

Again, you see the that has italics for those features that surround a relationship that are associated with increased risk of potentially -- potential lethality and another list that shows increased risk of continued violence.

I think some of these are not surprising. Some of them might seem counterintuitive but you can use this list to help you capture and illuminate what is going on in the relationship.

And then you can see on the other side, the right thigh, there are a couple of other sections here. One of them is one of those situations where circumstances that indicate increased risk of homicide/suicide where the offender will kill the victim and then killed himself and then the other list is for women who kill their male partners for this is intended to help us understand when a battered woman might be fighting back and potentially might be at risk of killing her partner.

This document is intended for any practitioner to use. You can put it on your desk. You can use it to look for the features that are indicated on here. Capture this in reports and then adjust what you do accordingly.

You also should have received a training memo that talked about how to use the practitioner guide to risk and danger. One of the points that want to make about the ways in which the blueprint uses -- response to the whole notion of risk and danger, it doesn't use a series of actuarial tools although it is grounded in research is not something designed to measure something and have you come up with a number that will tell you something about risk and danger there are some of those tools that are out there that are very useful. I think on is going to talk with you more about some of those when she has a chance to talk here. Some of those can be used within the blueprint. It uses a couple of different methods. One of them is to engage with victims in a way that invites disclosure. So that workers can learn more and better information about what is going on in the relationship that can help paint a picture of the violence.

The other is to try to capture and organize information about what is institutionally known about the offender. So that you can look at a variety of records and try to gather information and capture it write it down and send it to the next person what you do based on what you're learning.

And so did you look at the training memo on risk of major first of all this gives you an introduction about what the

document is and how you might use it. But then it has a little chart that helps each worker to understand and -- and uncover how they might use information that is in the practitioner's guide on risk and danger.

Work sample, in 911 does not unusual for a 911 call taker for a dispatcher to send information to law enforcement in a domestic violence case that will say something like trust accounts at XYZ address. Call takers in the dispatchers are required to gather more specific information under the blueprint that they can then send to law enforcement officers to help them were actively prepare and adequately prepare for what they're going to find on the scene. So that they can help protect themselves and protect everybody the scene from risk of violence. Instead of saying, for example, physical domestic particular address the call takers required to say something like the caller reports her husband punched her in the face three times and he has a gun in the house but she doesn't know where it is. For example, that helps law enforcement be much better prepared to respond. Another has been physical violence. They know something about the nature of the violence and there is a weapon on the scene. So those are the kinds of things that 911 can use to help prepare officers to respond more accurately to risk and danger.

If there is a 911 call taker and you have the practitioner guide in front of you you can be tuned into what are some of those actions that the batter has taken a that could indicate particular danger that you might want to pass on to the officer.

Patrol is organized to do this in a couple of different ways. Certainly patrol is going to do things like the alert -- be alert to the presence of weapons and where they are and how they might be used. Patrol be looking for things like whether or not somebody has been injured and the nature and extent of the injury. That can indicate the level of danger. And under the blueprint patrol is also directed to do things like be paying attention to whether there are vulnerable people at the scene like children, elderly people, people with disabilities might be more vulnerable if violence is occurring around them. The primary thing that we want control to do is to help really paint this picture of violence by asking three risk questions.

Versus do you think of the person could seriously injure or kill your children? Why are one of? Is violence getting worse the frequency or severity?

Asking the victim to describe the worst and most frightening incident. The way that these questions were developed was -- they were developed in St. Louis County Minnesota which is northern Minnesota, and they were working with the Sheriff's office out there. Initially in the Sheriff's office wanted to look at this question of risk and danger that a series of yes or no questions, kind of checklist, thinking that would be easier for officers to use. Is fairly simple and easy and fairly straightforward but what they found is that officers had their heads buried in the checklist. They were really talking with victims and having a conversation and exploring the meaning of violence act in risk factors.

They came up with these questions that would really help to paint the picture. Give a window into what is going on in the family or in the relationship at any given point.

On the benefits of asking questions in this way is that if both people have been alleged to use violence than the question can be asked of both people. Back and will help officers to figure out who the -- who is afraid of whom and why and who is at most risk and likely to do the most harm. These are really foundational questions under the blueprint that we really want patrol officers to do.

Then under the blueprint investigators who are following up on cases that patrol officers sent to them will have that kind of information. They have a really good picture about what is going on. Have heard from 911 specifics of the scene and can match up what people are saying at the scene from the 911 call taker and then they also can use a series of follow-up risk questions that are based primarily on the Jacquelyn Campbell danger assessment depending on what is uncovered by the questions the patrol officer asked. They can also prioritize your cases based on risk and danger, not just making it.

On we get the blueprint one of the things we found is that particularly in those cases the suspect had left the scene before police arrived that would what would happen if those reports that often are associated with particularly violent offenders because they know the chances of being held accountable or diminish if they leave the scene so they leave.

Nothing much happens. In part because those reports and at the bottom of the pile. People got to when they were able to work the way through the pile. Now under the blueprint good information about risk and danger from the get-go so officers can prioritize those cases or investigators can prioritize those cases based on what is he that is related to risk and danger.

They can handle those cases expeditiously and relay information to the evaluator and prosecutors.

The blueprint requires the jail officer to interrupt attempts to intimidate or harassed victims by blocking the numbers, documenting information in the suspect make or the defendant makes threats to the victim. Those are documented and pass on to other responding officers -- practitioners like patrol officers and law enforcement and prosecutors.

They also will report violations of no contact orders to the resting agency. If somebody is in custody in the Gospels be having contact with the victim those get reported right away.

Denise?

Yes.

Before we continue on as you are breaking down these rules and the relationships between each entity we had a question that was chatted in privately asking about child welfare staff. How that role fits within this overall framework? That is a really good question. The blueprint is designed for the criminal legal system. And so it is really looking at the criminal justice response to domestic violence cases it is not really taking up that old -- pull child where for system which is a different system. A whole different set of rules that they operate on. Blueprint does do is provides linkages to child welfare by making explicit when officers are required to report, giving guidance about how to respond to children at the scene, whether children have been physically harmed, witnesses, checking with the kids to make sure they are okay. The on that, since this document is really the criminal legal system as a focus, I will say this risk questions that patrol can ask can really help child welfare workers as well as criminal justice workers to get the picture of what is going on in home. We know that the police report is it really foundational document that can end up being used by all sorts of people. I think oftentimes law enforcement officers respond thinking about it in terms of their agency or perhaps the prosecution uses a. We know they can be used in Family Court for custody cases. They can be used in a protection order hearing that they can be used by child welfare. So even though this process is not designed to address the child welfare agency in particular, gathering this kind of information can really help child welfare folks illuminate what is going on.

And so, I will just cause for another second to say particularly to the person who was inquiring about that if any of you are unable to connect with your email right now we don't have access to those materials that Denise is referencing right now you can also find them on the Praxis website under blueprints for safety materials. That particular page, as you scroll down a bit, you will see the appendices for the guide and for the training memo on risk and dangerousness. So that may be helpful to you if you are interested in those resources now. I should cause here for a quick moment to save that -- continue to chat in any questions or comments that you have and I will keep an eye on it and do my best to ask Connie and Denise to respond. Thank you, Denise. Carry out.

Okay. That was an excellent question so thank you for bringing it out.

I am going to skip over these next couple of slides in the interest of time because you can read the slides yourself. You can read the training memo. Most of what I want to talk about is really summarizing what is in the slide. You can see the specific ways each worker is tuned in to look at identify, gather, act upon information that is related to risk and danger that they can pass on to the other person. So for example you can see how understanding and documenting and gathering this kind of information would be really useful for examples to the Bailey evaluator is going to make a recommendation to a judge about bail. I am going to go through to the probation section because that will lead me into the next thing I want to talk about before I turn the floor over to Connie.

Probation has a really key role in this whole notion of risk and danger. In the blueprint in the domestic violence case when the defendant has been convicted through a guilty plea or trial than it should be a presentence investigation to

