

# ESSENTIAL COMMITMENTS OF A BLUEPRINT FOR SAFETY COMMUNITY

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## **SELF-EXAMINATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING**

The Blueprint is about finding and fixing problems in the criminal legal system response to domestic violence crimes. It provides best-practice templates that articulate how agencies can more effectively aid and protect victims of ongoing abuse, hold offenders accountable, and further the goal of public safety. In a Blueprint community, criminal justice system agencies partner with community-based advocacy to check practices against the Blueprint standards and to identify and solve problems together. Agencies commit to a process of ongoing supervision and monitoring to sustain the Blueprint and adjust to unforeseen or new problems in their response.

## **BLUEPRINT FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

Six foundational principles are fundamental to how the Blueprint functions.

1. Adhere to an interagency approach and collective intervention goals.
2. Build attention to context and severity of abuse into each intervention.
3. Recognize that most domestic violence is a patterned crime requiring continuing engagement with victims and offenders.
4. Ensure sure and swift consequences for continued abuse.
5. Send messages of help to victims and messages of accountability to offenders.
6. Act in ways that reduce unintended consequences and the disparity of impact on victims and offenders.

The principles carry the essence of the Blueprint. In a Blueprint community, the major criminal justice agencies agree that the foundational principles will guide the response at each step.

## **A CENTRAL ROLE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY IN BLUEPRINT LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The Blueprint is distinctive in its emphasis on leadership by community-based advocacy organizations with a history of legal systems advocacy to individual victims of battering and experience in improving the legal system response.

The Blueprint calls on advocacy organizations and criminal justice agencies to work together to develop procedures and protocols. It also calls for including and consulting with those in the community who are most impacted by such public policies. Along with practitioner-advocate partnerships, a Blueprint

community engages with a range of community members, from victims and survivors to populations overrepresented and/or underserved in the system, to develop, implement, and monitor Blueprint policies and practice.

Community-based advocacy located in nonprofit, nongovernmental or tribal organizations, such as a local program for battered women, is essential to grounding the Blueprint in the scope and scale of domestic violence and in victims' lives and experiences. One way this can happen is to establish and maintain an advisory group of survivors who can help direct the process of adapting and implementing the Blueprint.

Community-based advocacy provides a setting where victims of battering can speak confidentially, freely, and openly. No one else plays this role, which is distinct from that of the important support provided by victim assistance or legal services within government agencies. Community-based advocacy typically has broader access to victims and survivors, many of whom are fearful of and try to avoid public institutions such as the criminal legal system. Research reinforces the value of the advocacy initiated response reflected in the Blueprint in improving court outcomes in domestic violence-related cases.

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