

Implications for Local Response: Lessons Learned from the Wright County Experience

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with Rose Thelen, Praxis CRR Technical Assistance Partner, Gender Violence Institute

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(upbeat music) (laughter)

- **[Voiceover]** Oh.

- **[Voiceover]** Your call is now live.

- **[Voiceover]** Hello everybody and welcome to this webinar on institutional analysis presented by Praxis International in partnership with the Office on Violence Against Women. Today's webinar, Implications for Local Response, Lessons Learned From the Wright County Experience is the second part, and last installment, on our series on the child welfare practice assessment guide. For those of you who didn't hear the first one, the first webinar in this series, entitled Planning and Conducting a Practice Assessment of Community Response to Domestic Violence, Child Protective Services aired on November second and it was an introduction to a new practice assessment tool. There's a recording of that webinar on our website in case you missed it. You can check that afterwards. My name is Olga Trujillo and I am a senior training and program specialist here at Praxis International. I'm going to ask Rose, who is also on our call today, and I'll introduce her in a minute, to advance slides as we move through today. We have a few others on our call today. We have Denise Ang who will be monitoring the chat during our webinar and, as always, Liz Carlson will manage the technical details of your participation. So before we get going, I'll pass this to her to go over some important participation tips right now. Liz?

- **[Voiceover]** Thank you Olga. Hello everyone, welcome, we are delighted that so many of you have taken an interest in this topic and so we hope that it will be a helpful and interesting session for you. Before we begin with the presentation, I'll just touch upon a few webinar suggestions to pave the way, hopefully, for your participation today. So, if there is anyone who is on this webinar, but is just participating by telephone only, is not logged in to the webinar platform itself, if you would like to receive a copy of the PowerPoint so you can follow along visually during this session, send an email to denise@praxisinternational.org and she'll send you that PowerPoint. If you have a question or a comment to make at any point during the session itself, because the participant lines are muted, the best way for you to share your comments would be also by email, and the same person, denise@praxisinternational.org will be your best contact, your best means for getting your question integrated into the conversation. For the rest of you who are participating in the webinar itself, you're logged in and you see the PowerPoint right now, we will encourage you throughout this session today to utilize the chat function, that's the way in which we'll be able to integrate your thinking with ours. So, the lower left hand portion of your screen, you'll see the Public Chat, and if you haven't done so yet go ahead and say a quick little hello and let us know where you're participating from, maybe what the weather is, if you have a co-worker who is joining you today. It's a good way for you to practice using that chat and it's also just a nice, kind of, friendly beginning to our session. So, go ahead and do that

now and actually feel free to utilize that chat throughout our session. You'll also notice there's a tab that says private down in that chat box in the lower left hand portion of your screen. If you have something that you would like to communicate just privately, either individually or to the presenters today, open that tab, double click on the speaker or speakers and that will just be an email or a communication feed between you and that person. That's available to you at any time today, too. Just a couple of other things, if you happen to get disconnected, either by the telephone or to the webinar platform itself, rejoin through your original process and keep in mind that if you happen to lose any content for this session, it's being recorded and will be posted on the Institutional Analysis TA webpage and so you can revisit the content, anything you perhaps missed, after the fact. So, Olga, I think we are ready for you.

- **[Voiceover]** Great. So today we'll be exploring the tab Welfare Response to Domestic Violence and we're going to be discussing one community's experience with our new tool, the tool that we at Praxis have been developing to assist communities to examine and enhance their work with battered women and their children. We're really fortunate today to have three guests with us. We originally had four guest, but Jodi Vannett from Rivers of Hope had an unexpected conflict today and is not able to join us. so we have Marianne Charbonneau from Wright County Child Protection. We also have Jessica Nelson, also from Wright County, and we have Rose Thelen from the Gender Violence Institute. Some of you might remember Rose from last month who joined us to discuss the tool itself.

Liz Carlson is helping us and Denise Eng from Praxis is going to monitoring the chat throughout our time. So, before I introduce our folks who are our panelists today, I wanted to just kind of give you a little introduction about the practice assessment tool. The tool is entitled Planning and Conducting a Practice Assessment of Community Response to Domestic Violence, Child Protective Services. It was created by Praxis International in partnership with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the Center for the Study of Social Policy. It uses the Praxis institutional analysis process, and this guide is designed for use by community teams or advocates, child protection representatives, and other stake holders to collaboratively assess their child protective service response to the occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse. And the process helps communities seek answers to some critical questions. Such as, do we know when battering is a factor in child maltreatment cases and it's impact on the child and mother? What do we know about her strategies to protect her children?

Does our intervention enhance or diminish her capacity to protect her children? Does our intervention increase or decrease risk of harm from the batterer? And is there more that we can do to stop the batterer? The tools included in the guide direct inter-agency teams to assess their current response for recommended frameworks, principles, policies, and practices to enhance child protective services' response to and strengthen linkages with the community based advocacy programs and other community agencies on behalf of battered women and their children. To test the guide, the tools covered in part one of this series, Praxis worked with Rivers of Hope, a local community based advocacy program, and that's the presenter Jody Vannette who's unable to join us today. So they worked with the community based advocacy program and we worked with Wright County Health and Human Services Child Protection in Buffalo, Minnesota.

The assessment team started with a discussion series of the co-occurrences of domestic violence and child maltreatment to enhance relationship building and establish a common language for understanding the dynamics of battering in relationship to Child Protective Services. The assessment team then mapped their current response conducted policy review and engaged in in-depth case file analysis. This webinar will explore their process and experience with the practice assessment, including an overview of key recommendations for enhancements for local practice and state guidance for all agencies in Minnesota. So today, thank you, today we will be talking with Marianne Charbonneau, Jessica Nelson, and Rose Thelen. All were involved in the test of this new tool in Wright County. Marianne is an LICSW with 26 years of county experience, she received a master's degree in counseling psychology from the Adler Institute in 1989 and received her license clinical social worker in 1996. She has been a supervisor at Wright County for 17 years and Marianne is currently the direct supervisor of the Child Protection ongoing workers. Welcome, Marianne.

- **[Voiceover]** Thank you.

- **[Voiceover]** Jessica Nelson is currently with Wright County, Minnesota. She supervises Child Protection assessments and investigations along with truancy services, minor parent services, and early intervention services. Jessica has also been spear heading the efforts in Wright County to address child sex trafficking. She has a masters of social work from the University of Minnesota and her studies carried an emphasis on child welfare work. Before becoming a supervisor, Jessica's had a lot of experience, several years of which was working with youth and families in many facets in addition to working with children with mental health diagnosis and their families, conducting child protection investigations, working with runaway youth, and working with youth in schools. In her tenure with Wright County she has brought about several initiatives that have enhanced the work that is done there and she anticipates the implementation of the recommendations from this project will one day become a regular part of their practice and provide child welfare workers with the ability to serve children and families impacted by domestic violence better. Welcome, Jessica.

- **[Voiceover]** Thank you.

- **[Voiceover]** And then Rose Thelen, as many of you know from last time, she has been an advocate since 1979. She founded and coordinated a criminal justice system response, CCR, for 10 years, served as legislative coordinator for the Minnesota coalition for battered women, she co-founded the gender violence institute in 1993, she has implemented multi-jurisdictional CCR with tribal reservation advocacy programs and worked to develop collaborations among advocates, law enforcement, prosecution offices in 10 counties. With advocates for Human Rights, she's also conducted training with 20 East European countries on the CCR approach, and from 2008 to 2012 she served as the Wright County Commissioner. Over the past few years, Rose was involved in the development and testing of this practice assessment guide. Thanks for joining us again, Rose.

- **[Voiceover]** It's good to be here, Olga.

- **[Voiceover]** Thanks very much for all of you for being on our webinar today. Before I start asking you all a few questions about your experience, I thought I would just kind of give people a sense of what the practice assessment is and some of the tools and we'll get started. And then, for those of you who are listening, if you're considering conducting an institutional assessment or if you're new to the whole idea of them, this is your chance to learn from those who have tested this assessment tool so please feel free to tech questions that come up as you're listening. Denise is going to keep track of those, she'll jump in at times, and then we'll also take breaks for questions just to make sure that we're not missing anything. So, Rose, would you advance to the next slide? The Testing of the Assessment tool had two goals. The first goal was for the Wright County folks to identify ways to enhance Child Protection response to the occurrence of child maltreatment and battering in Wright County. So the actual conduct of the assessment. And then the second was to be able to step back and recommend changes to our draft guide to improve a final version that we could release nationally. And that's, the guide is actually currently under development and should be finished after the first of the year. The assessment, testing of the assessment tool, basically the tool has various components in it to guide communities in a discussion series to enhance relationships and start identifying common language. It also has tools to enable communities to map the part of the child welfare response that you all are focusing on, to analyze policy and text, to conduct in-depth case file analysis, and help guide the assessment to recommendations and additional activities. So, with that very small introduction, let's get started. So, I'll start with you, Rose. How did you come together to work on this issue and use this tool?

- **[Voiceover]** Well, you know, it started a little differently, I think, than probably is going to occur in most communities because I had been involved in working at the coalition on a big project with a number of counties and Child Protection workers and advocacy programs in the early 's and then was also involved in developing some guidelines at the state level, but you know, and also with Praxis when they had some funding to work on these particular issues, as well. And so I've longed been interested in it and working on different places to try and work to reform or enhance practices. And then when I became a county commissioner I had all these opportunities as commissioner and also I served on the county Human Services board, and then through that process also a number of committees and task forces and what was called a children's justice initiative and was serving with a group of women and, I think it was mostly women, from Human Services and Child Protection and thought they were really doing some fine work and they were good people, progressive. And I new that this tool was in development so I said, "When it comes available for testing I want to approach "you all to see about whether you're interesting in testing "as well." And so when it became available I was no longer in office so I went back to the county, this was after I approached the local advocacy program, Rivers of Hope, which is a very, very small, too small, domestic violence program that serves a number of counties to see if they were interested and they were. I spent a bunch of time with their director and their advocates and, as often happens in small programs like these, they both were gone before we actually got started, but a new advocate and the director, in particular, were ready to jump in on a moment's notice and they were on board and began to work with us. And by the time they got started a team had been assembled. So that's how I come to it.

- **[Voiceover]** Okay, and then Marianne, from your standpoint, how did you get involved in this?

- **[Voiceover]** Well, Rose contacted us here at the county and so we met, Jessica and myself and then our program manager and our director of the agency to talk about the opportunity for us to participate in the Praxis International assessment using that tool. And we had the opportunity of a grant being available for this so it was sort of a little window for us to look at it that would help us in this process. We here in Wright County have a number of cases, of our Child Protection cases that do have some facet of domestic violence somehow interwoven in the case. And so our county had maybe three years prior, a domestic violence group that included law enforcement, corrections, and the county attorney's office, but they did not include human services at the time. We thought that it would be, maybe, a good idea for us to maybe look at this from the human service perspective, and especially the child protection perspective and then thought that it could be an opportunity for us to link in with law enforcement, corrections, and county attorney to kind of re-pull that group together. They're not meeting regularly right now, but reconvene and share kind of where we're at with human services and sort of combine looking at it from both ends. So it was an opportunity from that end.

- **[Voiceover]** That's great. And then I know one of the biggest challenges that people have when they think about doing something like this is kind of trying to figure out who to include. And I'm curious to see how you all kind of decided, in terms of how you pulled your team together. Marianne, can you just tell us a little bit about how you were thinking about that.

- **[Voiceover]** Well, we were kind of looking at who would maybe would be involved. Jessica and I, obviously, the two Child Protection supervisors. And then we talked about who would make sense, who would have the time that could be part of it, what player should be a part of it. So, we obviously needed our manager and our director to be on board before we moved forward.

- **[Voiceover]** Cool. And then Jessica, how about for you? How did that work for you to come join the team and then also identifying other people?

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, it was really tough to determine who we should involve in the project. So we decided to mostly let people kind of sign up across the agency to be involved. Especially with the discussion series portion of it since so many people had a different perspective about the different topics that we were discussing. So we involved our public health staff and social service staff, not just from Child Protection, but from a mental health perspective, adult services perspective. Which gave us multiple lenses to see things from. And then community, the Rivers of Hope advocacy group as well. I think if I had to do it all over again I would try to make sure that there were more individuals from the Child Protection system involved and some additional members from the criminal justice system involved with it. I probably would have, also, asked members to be involved during the entire project instead of just the discussion series or just the case analysis, or mapping pieces of it. Whereas, you know, just some of the folks were in just one part or another, but not all the way through.

- **[Voiceover]** Is that right? Got cha. Yeah, I can totally see how having people involved the whole way through would help inform the process, but then also, at the tail end, trying to figure out what changes to make. I could see how that would make a difference too. And I'm curious, was there anything else that was going on? I mean, to have Rose in your community is really kind of rare, to have an advocate,

basically, who's been in the field to then become a county commissioner and then, you know, from that kind of top down perspective, is pretty unusual. Was there anything else that was going on that kind of enabled you all to set the stage for the assessment. Marianne, could you talk to us about that first?

- **[Voiceover]** Sure, I think we were interested with the opportunity to look a little bit more closely at what our practice is. I think we are, kind of, proactive here in Wright County where we want to look at how we can learn, how we can grow, how we can develop. So this was an opportunity to look at our work with Child Protection and domestic violence cases. And it also, we felt, would give us the opportunity to see how we could approve what we're doing well. Sort of evaluate from that end. We like the idea that we had Praxis International staff that would be available through this grant that would allow them and local community members to be a part of this so we would have an outside perspective. It wasn't just us internally looking at the process, but we had an outside perspective, so we had a check in balance in that. To be real honest and realistic about what we were doing. We have had and currently have social workers that had domestic violence backgrounds, they worked as advocates in the domestic violence center, we included one of them in this process, and that was a real advantage. You know, to have someone that has worn both hats.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, I could see how that would really help. And Jessica, how about for you? Was there anything else that kind of help set the stage for the assessment?

- **[Voiceover]** I would have to say that Wright County was just really in a position at the time to be able to take on a project like this when Rose had talked to us about it. I think, you know, if we were approached about it right now there's no way we'd be able to do it and I think sometimes timing is just everything. We feel like right now we're one step ahead of everybody else and that since we have completed the project and we can move forward with our recommendations and the direction we're moving in is the same direction that some of the legislative changes in our state are headed. And so we're right in sync with where things are moving, which kind of puts us at an advantage.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, that sounds great. I know, yeah, sometimes timing is everything and having the right people in the right place, having a grant really helps. So, for other communities where they don't have, you know, a county commissioner like Rose, or haven't really, might not have a grant opportunity, what would you recommend? So basically, from the child welfare, I'll start with you Marianne. From the perspective of someone who's a supervisor in child welfare, if you were going to advise a domestic violence advocate that was thinking about approaching their child welfare folks, what would you recommend?

- **[Voiceover]** I think, you know, Child Protection and social services, it's a busy area, so with coming in and having the opportunity that we could do parts of the tool, or pieces of the tool instead of committing to the whole tool, that was enticing for us because it was scary looking at the commitment and time commitment for the whole tool and looking at, we had three different levels of case review, and the top level of case reviews was quite a bit more time commitment on our part. And so, that is a little bit scary. So I think if you can present things that we can fine tune or scale or use part of the tool to look at, you know, this with your staff and with groups, I think that would be helpful. I think our

flexibility with letting people come in to sessions that weren't a part of all the sessions, but to come what you can come to, I think that brought some other people in from the outside that may have not been able to commit if it were for the whole assessment tool. There's pros and cons to that decision. So, you know, I wouldn't say that that's the way you have to go because there's some negative pieces, which Jessica's already spoken to, that it would've been an advantage having consistently everybody there, but at the same time, it was a way to get certain people to the table that we may not have been able to get to the table had we required them to be present for everything.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, that's a really good point. You mentioned something, Marianne, so as a follow up, you mentioned the time commitment. About how much time did it take you all, roughly?

- **[Voiceover]** Well, we had a couple meetings prior, so we probably had maybe six hours that we put in in prep, looking at things. We had some internal meetings with our manager and director, too, when we were making a decision, whether to go ahead. So, there were probably about six, seven hours here at the county in prep. When we did go ahead, the structure, the questions were very structured, it was very organized, that helped a lot. We had six one and a half hour sessions of, kind of, looking at things. We did a mapping session, which we didn't have enough time for so we went overtime from what we had allocated and then decided we needed another two hours to three hours to continue with that and we could've used more time.

- **[Voiceover]** So Marianne, was it over the course of six months that you think that you guys were working on this off and on?

- **[Voiceover]** We did the questions and looked intensively at the different six weeks of question discussion areas, that was over a three month period. And then, in between that, we probably extended five months extended with some of the different activities that we participated in.

- **[Voiceover]** Okay, okay so, yeah, that is a fair amount of time and I imagine that that was based on fitting it in with your work schedule. So not every day all the time, but maybe once a week, or once every couple weeks?

- **[Voiceover]** Right, we started the discussion with Rose probably early winter of 2013 and then we didn't start implementing it until about July, August of .

- **[Voiceover]** Okay, and then for those people who aren't in Minnesota, early winter would be like September?

- **[Voiceover]** Probably more like October, November.

- **[Voiceover]** Okay. (laughing) Alright, great. 'Cause our winters are legendary. Jessica can you-- Sorry, Jessica what advice would you give to DV advocates who wanted to do this? Wanted to get their child welfare workers to do this in their community?

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, I would just have to say that it really, one of the main depending factors is the relationship that you have between your advocacy agency and the Child Protection agency. As you

learned earlier we were approached by Rose, which is kind of a third party to the two agencies which made it easier for our agency to be open to the process to look at our work. I think if the advocacy agency had been interested and approached us, we might not have had the investment in the project the same. So if you're an advocacy agency and you're interested in working with your Child Protection team using this assessment tool, you need to have an established relationship with that team first. And if you have an estranged relationship or no relationship at all with that team, you have to work on that relationship because asking an agency to participate in a project like this could put them in a defensive position and that might not bring about the positive practice changes that you can see as a result of this project. So one of the best ways to build that relationship would be to take the time to reach out to your partner and build those relationships. So it's going to take a lot more time to get this project going if you have to first build those relationships. Reach out to them and start with a meet and greet schedule, regular meeting so everyone can get to know one another. Socialize a little bit, work a little bit during the work day and then you can move forward from there. If you already have established a good relationship between the advocacy agency and the Child Protection agency then what I would do is schedule a meeting to bring up the assessment tool. You know, if one party knows about it and the other doesn't, broach the topic and talk about it and say, "Hey, I learned about this tool, I would love to engage "in conducting a project like this together, "what do you think?" So it really depends on what the relationship dynamics are like. I would have to say that it was really, really beneficial for us to have Rose, who is a somewhat neutral third party in our eyes conducting or facilitating the project and who had been the person who had approached us on it and facilitating the tool in the process. So if you can apply for a grant or having a third party that can facilitate the process, that is always, in our eyes, beneficial.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, I can totally see that. I've seen that in other communities where they've wanted to try to work together better and having someone to come in and facilitate discussions kind of, you know, help people develop common language just by just that alone is really valuable. So thank you, that's really helpful. So, I thought I'd stop here and just check and see how we're doing with questions, Denise.

- **[Voiceover]** Yes, thank you Olga. We don't really have a question as much as we do a comment from Amber in Ohio who says that in Ohio they're planning to implement the safe and together model by , which I believe is promoted by David Mandell and Associates. I have not read their material because they're proprietary materials that I think they offer for sale. I know there are some similarities to this kind of work and so I just want to first of all point out that this is a collaborative model that's being tried in Ohio, and also wondering if either of you, Rose or Olga, have any sense of how they might differ for parallel work if you want to take just a minute at this point.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, Rose do you have anything that you want to say about the safe and together model that you know and how it compares?

- **[Voiceover]** Well I actually, like Denise says, it's proprietary, meaning it's for sale. I've seen some collar points and things like that, but it's of interest to me that David Mandell recently came out with something that sounds a little like the assessment tool, but again, you have to buy it. And I'm trying not to have a con when I say that. (laughter) At any rate, so he is, I think he does some sort of assessment stuff and maybe Amber, hi Amber, maybe knows even more about what they do, but I think that any

tool that you get from anywhere, particularly a trademark sort of thing, look for opportunities to expand, I would say, your reach. So maybe as a part of that process with the safe and together model, take a look at what Wright County did. Or there's other innovative stuff going around as well. Don't just tie into somebody saying, "You've got to do it this way and it's the only way you "can do it and it's gonna cost you this much," let's say. Although I understand that they have very similar goals, which is to strengthen the mothers and child's relationships and to do things like protect the strategy, shift the focus of the batterer, and that sort of thing. But I guess that's a long way of saying, no I don't really know too much about it except I think it's very compatible and hopefully you'll be able to throw your net out further and take a look at all these great things that are going on, too.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, and that's my sense too, Rose. It's very compatible, again, it is proprietary so I haven't really taken a look at it. I've worked with the Florida coalition over the years they have been implementing the Safe and Together model and it does focus on the safety of the mother in order to provide safety for children and focuses accountability on the batterer. So a lot of the same stuff. The thing that I don't know about their tool that I love about the assessment tool is you can pretty much examine any question with the assessment tool. So if you have a question about how, for example, how many children of color are being removed in homes. Or how many families of color are coming into the child welfare system, you can do that with this assessment tool and I'm not confident that you can, that the Safe and Together model really kind of looks at issues like that. So the assessment tool is really flexible in terms of what you focus on and some of the things that might arise from it. Any other questions, Denise?

- **[Voiceover]** No except we have a couple of comments about how Michigan is doing the Safe and Together model also, but a comment about the appreciation for the help in these webinars and then sort of another suggestion from Sheen that there is a compatibility between what we're doing and David Mandell's model.

- **[Voiceover]** That's great, cool. That's good to know. Thanks so much for the comments. I've noticed in the chat that lots of people were talking about the weather and Rose and I are in Phoenix, Arizona for a conference this week and we were noticing, I should say I was noticing that some people think it's cold in Phoenix, Arizona, I mean in Arizona and I just want to say it's cold in Minnesota. So I get that for those of you. Anyway, just thought I'd toss that little weather fact in there. Okay, let's move us along. So one of the first things that the assessment does is kind of suggest a discussion series to go through. And actually, Rose, I'm going to start with you, if you don't mind, because you have facilitated these discussion series. So how did you feel that that went?

- **[Voiceover]** Well I thought it was, you know, good and bad. And this is, you know, we inflicted sort of the draft on Wright County and so in doing the discussion series first I think we all agreed that in terms of the final draft that we would recommend that the discussion series come later because there was so many things we learned about, mapping, the process, and the policy review process and things that came after the discussion series that would've been helpful at the discussion series. That said, I also thought the discussion series was really good just because it brought up some of these questions about how do we see protecting the child and what do we know about protecting the child? And what do we

know about, you know, and one of the things that stuck out for me was how very, how everyone agreed the best way to protect that child, everybody in the room knew, and this is a savvy group too, Child Protection is always pretty savvy and they benefit from the wisdom of the people, the supervisors, and that they're open to new ideas and stuff. But at any rate, they were well informed, and everybody, even though they're more or less forced by their processes, their procedures, their protocols, their structured decision making tools, etc, to focus primarily on the victim, and mostly that meant trying to get her to leave. But everybody in the room, Child Protection, advocacy programs, public health, everybody knows the best way to protect the child was to protect the mother and the best way to protect the mother was to get the offender to stop his use of violence and his capacity and opportunity to manipulate the systems to, first of all, make him invisible and get everyone to look at what's the matter with her. And that was a good deal for the batterer, so it was really useful in that way, I thought, to bring up the topics were really positioned to get people to talk about and think about and reach agreements about what everybody believes. You know, and it made everybody like co-investigators and it was, I don't know, it felt kind of good. I don't know about you and Jessica and Marianne. I know you were, like I say, inflicted with us going, "Do you do this? Do you do that? Do you do this?" And that was kind of out of school because those were questions that you were gonna answer through the rest of the process. But anyway, I think the discussion series is just even worth taking a look at in itself.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, and Marianne, you sort of talking about this a little earlier, how you guys had six meetings over the course of three months. Can you tell us a little bit about how that went?

- **[Voiceover]** Well, the meetings are structured for about an hour and a half each and in those meetings we were able to, we had certain topic areas, like the cycle of silence, the impact on children, looking at the mother as the victim verses the perpetrator. And so we had some interesting discussions with the mix of people in the room that were coming in from different perspectives. Child Protection would obviously be looking at how the mother is protecting her child. Which would be a challenge for her in a domestic violence situation. And so we hit some discussion around that and we had some good ideas that came out of that, some good insight, what different programs were doing. Some of the community programs were able to share what they were able to do or offer that would be helpful, so there were some educational components that came out around it. And I think we had trouble, kind of, completing their discussion topics because the discussions just started to take a life of their own that went into further depth with the questions. We stayed on track, but the depth and the information that was shared and the topics that were looked at, we kept drilling deeper on that and I think that was helpful for us.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, yes. And Jessica, what about you? How did you feel about that?

- **[Voiceover]** I agree, I think we did just keep drilling deeper and deeper and I think the discussion series, overall, went really well and I liked having the various participants involved in that series. And I think, again, if we hadn't had that additional person facilitating it, and the existing relationships prior to beginning that series, that we would've really struggled with discussing some of those topics. Because some of them are asking direct questions about, you know, the Child Protection system, or the advocacy system and if you don't have a basic understanding or knowledge of them or a relationship, that could

have presented some challenges. And I think having Rose move things along and not get into any of those things with the group helped move it forward for us and I think that it was good to have, I think, as Rose stated, we kind of discussed moving that down in the agenda of the project as a whole because there were a lot of questions and we got off topic because people outside of the Child Protection agency didn't know, "Okay, well what steps does a case go through and what "kinds of things do you do here and when is the court "involved?" And so, if everybody had that background information before the discussion series, that we wouldn't have had to veer into some of those topics during the discussion series and that would've been helpful.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, that's a really good point. So kind of like, when do we, like what ground level, we want to make sure everybody knows before we start discussing some of this stuff. That's a really good point. You know what I think is really funny? So in Rose's bio I said that she's basically been an advocate, a domestic violence advocate since . And it's really, there's a testament to how well she worked with you all that you and Marianne are identifying Rose as a third party, kind of neutral. So it just shows you the skill involved in facilitating discussions where everyone felt safe and that was like learning opportunities for everyone. So I just wanted to say that out loud as we kind of move along. So then--

- **[Voiceover]** Let me just say just a word on this, I think the assessment, the assessment guide in itself really gets you focused on, "Okay, this isn't personal." You know, what everybody brings to the room is their expertise and layers of it. And so, if somebody sees it a particular way, it's probably because of how they are or are not organized by these various things like policies, procedures, forms, check lists, etc. And so, you know, so I think it's, you know, I mean that's the beauty of the assessment tool, period, is I think they really move you from taking anything personally to looking at, "What in this institution "that everybody inherited, what makes them do certain "things and not do other things?" And it's true for advocacy programs, too, because advocacy programs was not organized to do what was needed for this woman and this process, as well. But that's a stepping back process that the assessment tool allows, you know? Nobody really had a handle on this, it's like, okay but who better to figure out how to do this than the people directly involved?

- **[Voiceover]** Right, right, exactly. And that's a really good point, Rose. You know, the whole thing about institutional analysis is that we're not looking at individual workers, we're looking at how institutions organized their work. So it does, it immediately takes people out of it and looks at the ways in which institutions organized their work. So that's a really good point. So then, just a reminder to everyone, the tools involved in the assessment is the mapping, policy and text analysis, case file analysis, recommendations, and then additional activities like the discussion series and recommendations and things like that. So, I'm curious, Jessica I'll start with you, kind of what of these tools did you find most helpful? And then if you could also let us know what you found that was most challenging?

- **[Voiceover]** Well, to start I would say that they were all helpful, all the tools, but each for a different reason. For me, personally, I found that the in-depth case file analysis had the most profound impact on me. Once I started looking at the information from a different lens, having gone through all of the other different tools since that was kind of our last tool, or process that we were going through, I was able to identify things that we could have done differently in the work that we were doing better right away.

Little things, sometimes, such as calling the probation officer to connect with that officer or agent about an offender. Today, when I look at it, I kind of think to myself, "Oh, that's a no-brainer!" But as we were looking at the case files themselves, it was all too often that it was something that was overlooked because there wasn't time in the day, or there were high case load sizes, lack of training. I mean, who knows, but it was just all too often that workers weren't calling the offender's probation officers to find out what their conditions were, or weren't looking it up. So certainly some of those little things that now we're making sure that are being done. As always, it was nice to see that our agency had been doing some things well and it reinforced those things that we were doing well. I thought that the policy review was helpful in the fact that for us there actually weren't many policies to review. Which, for me, meant that there might need to be some work in this area. Maybe not necessarily more policies, 'cause I don't believe that more policies is always better, but maybe just something more in writing to help workers identify domestic violence in cases. Or, you know, at least some kind of training materials when I identify domestic violence what do I do or what steps do I take? Or how to I identify domestic violence in cases? And then in other areas most of the stuff we identified for change or policy areas would be at the state level, which can be challenging because we don't have a whole lot of pull in that direction. So, you know, we're going to be working with Rose to hopefully resolve some of that as well. I found the mapping to be really helpful, but more so for others that weren't from our agency. Kind of like what we talked about with the discussion series if we had done that up front, people would've had a better understanding of the life of a case, so they had a better understanding of what process we go through and what it looks like to review a case. Or what criteria do we screen cases in under domestic violence? Or how do we identify domestic violence in cases that aren't necessarily open for that, but we identify that there is domestic violence in the home? So just identifying those things through the mapping was really helpful for everybody involved in the in-depth case review because they weren't necessarily, like I said, Child Protection folks. So they didn't necessarily know that process. And then, I think that the case file review tool was challenging when we first started working with it. I think after day one the tool was changed, even, a little bit. It sometimes was hard to take all of the information from the case, especially some of the cases that lasted longer than, you know, a month or two that had volumes and volumes of pages. And we tried to make sure we had some short term cases and long term cases. So the large cases, it was hard to pull all of that data and put it into a small tool. So, I think if we were going to give another agency advice on how to do the case file reviews, I would recommend that you break up into teams and review each case on a different date and that you give yourself a lot of time to review the cases and fill out the tool and then come back to the group at the end of the day and talk about your case and identify common themes. Whereas, we kind of did it as a whole group. Which, we spent some quiet time reading and stuff and tried to pull out common themes, but I think working in a larger group it was harder to do. And I think we identified how long it would take to do the case file reviews, but we didn't give ourselves enough time to do as many as we would've liked to do. And lastly I think that initially if one of the tools seem to be looking for the faults of the system, which initially I became a little defensive and that the tool was less on the positive aspects of the work that was being done. And so when we had a discussion that everybody was really open to, which was really a positive experience in having that discussion, we made sure to balance that out during our discussion phase and looking at the tool.

- **[Voiceover]** Oh yeah, that's a really good point. Thanks a lot, Jessica, I never thought about that in terms of an agency representative hearing kind of where the gaps were in the tools. You know, like from the case review, like where gaps coming up between what women and their children want or need and what the system can do and how, like, identifying those gaps would feel really bad as someone who works for that agency. So that balance approach totally makes sense to me. So, let me see Marianne, can you let us know what you felt was kind of the most helpful and then what was most challenging?

- **[Voiceover]** Well, I thought the mapping was most helpful as far as getting everyone on the same page and giving common ground for everybody to work off of. So I would say if you could only do one thing to map the process because it was educational. We brought in what the different areas do and how they feed into Child Protection. So, for example, we're dependent on law enforcement's reports and what they put in the reports. And if they don't put enough in the reports on impact to the child, then it's not going to be screen in Child Protection. Rivers of Hope is dependent on some of the information they receive from the report. So we, you know, looked, in the mapping, we looked at, okay, how does the case enter your system? Who touches it before it comes in? How does it come in? And I thought it was something we were gonna do and map it out and we'd be done in an hour or two and I think we ended up adding a second two hour session, I think some of the sessions might've even gone three, one of them. And I think we could've probably used a whole day for mapping and discussion. It was educational for people, there were assumptions different areas had on what Child Protection did, what they do in intake, screening, track and ongoing. I myself was surprised at when we started breaking it out, how much information there was up there. You kind of take it for granted when you're kind of entrenched in it, working with it every day. But I think, you know, it gave us, we want to come back to this and review more in this area when we get to policy. Or we started identifying areas that we may want to look at again when we get into some of the other discussion topics. The tool definitely promoted a lot of discussion. We used a four foot wide roll of paper that wrapped around the room. I mean, it was large, and I think we used that for each of the discussion sessions, the mapping sessions. Both had paper that went around the room and then kind of attached the first one to the second and it was pretty, just kind of striking how many pieces were involved. And then Marin from practice came and she was the mapper and so she would use different color markers for different things. If it was policy, she would use one color marker, if it was law enforcement or corrections that were touching upon this area, she'd use another colored marker. If it was Child Protection we had a colored marker, if it was community programs or community services where we were referring to at this point, we'd use a different color marker. So it, to me, it just kind of laid things out that probably looked obvious to us here, but I found out in going to it so many more steps and how it is perceived by the community and what the community is thinking of it and what they're missing as far as what we're doing. And so, again, I would say that that was helpful. I would do a mapping first, maybe in a day workshop with a mapping part of it and then getting into some discussion question.

- **[Voiceover]** Okay, cool. And then what was your least, what did you find was most challenging?

- **[Voiceover]** The most challenging? I wasn't at the case reviews, but I'm sure that would've been the most challenging just based on the discussion and people's comments afterwards because I think they

went in thinking they were gonna get more accomplished and it wasn't as much accomplished. And I remember there was some discussion whether they would set some more case review days and then they decided to use what they had and not add more days at that point. So, just based on what everybody heard I would say that I was probably lucky that I missed that part. (laughter)

- **[Voiceover]** That's great. And then, so Rose, did you have a sense of what you felt which tool worked the best and which one you found most challenging?

- **[Voiceover]** Well, I think I probably agree with what Jessica and Marianne said, I thought the mapping was so instructive because you just saw how complicated it was. You know, from report to decision about the child and all the family assessment, or the family investigation. You know, and it was also instructive to me to look at the policies and procedures. And I use policies and procedures as big and little and you can have, a policy can be a forum that guides you, or a procedure that takes you, requires you to use a particular form and enter particular data into your database. And then, also, policy can be written like the wisdom of the team, the people who guide the discussions about decisions to be made, but what we kept trying to emphasize that we really did want this to be institutionalized in writing. And not just at the super policy level, because there had been guidelines that were developed in Minnesota in the early 's, and I was part of developing those, but I remember at the time thinking that it's not enough to have a big T policy at the top, you need to take a look at every step in that map and figure out how does this policy change what everybody does? What everybody is directed to do by their forms, their procedures, their guidelines, their check lists, etc? And that wasn't done with the policy at the state level. In fact, it was never even mandated and it was quickly overlooked as anything to guide what happened at the local level. So it became a footnote, more or less, on the general guidelines that were about how to screen cases, general cases. And so it was very interesting, me I'm kind of a policy wonk, so I do think we're discovering by what our agencies tell us to do in terms of what's in writing. So anyway, that was good. The most challenging for me was looking at the lives of the women and their children depicted in the case files, you know? And that even though it was with a direct goal of us, just to see how difficult their lives were and how much poverty was involved in there, as well. And desperate circumstances that I think influence people. And then also how invisible the batterer was. Even though you knew he was impacting everything that the child did, even if he wasn't present in the home, he was still exerting an influence and that that to me was the biggest gap that we require so often for these women to do all these things and meanwhile he gets the state, you know. He becomes like that dancing bear in that video that nobody seems him because they're so focused on all these other things. So that, I felt, was really good too in the whole process. There was the biggest agreement about that, that we can't just rely on Child Protection to solve this problem. There's a number of people that come into contact with the batterer, with this mother, with these children, and then she's also going to be in, probably, custody courts. So it's just, you know, really getting to seeing, holding that offender accountable again. (mumbling)

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, you know, and that's actually a good segue, Rose, and I apologize to folks that we're quite a bit behind schedule and that was totally my timing mistake. So I'm just going to ask Jessica if she could tell us what kind of recommendations came out of it. So we have, just to let you know, Jessica, we

have about four minutes for you to talk about the recommendations. So, what kind of came out of this, what'd you guys find out?

- **[Voiceover]** So I think that the majority of the recommendations that we saw come out of it were really local level practice related recommendations. Some of them were simple recommendations such as changing a form to be more specific about asking good domestic violence questions. And then there were other recommendations that were more in depth. Gathering information from a victim about their protective factor and what are the things that she has done to keep her children safe. Inquiring more about what does safe mean to her and her family and what does that look like? Making sure that we're keeping the victim and the children together was the priority and identifying how they will get their basic needs. Such as Rose talking about poverty. How are we going to address the housing needs and some of those identified issues? Asking probing questions, being alert and aware when the topic comes up when you're meeting with a couple together and what to watch for. So we talked a lot about those non-verbal signals and body language and how and when to talk to the victim and children separately and how to go about those things. So, just kind of those practice things in training. A lot about training of workers. And then getting more information and coordinating with law enforcement to get the additional information. Asking them to put that information into their police reports so we do have it, so we can make those good decisions about children and families right up front. One recommendation that stands out for us is working with the juvenile justice system and the courts to hold offenders accountable. That, as Rose had mentioned, really stood out is the offenders were invisible and I saw one of the questions, sorry, on the forum. One of the people was asking (mumbling) for a mom. We were doing a lot of that, putting it on the mom. It's her responsibility to keep the kids safe and that it's on her, but it's on him too. He's the offender, he's the one making it unsafe, so really putting it back on him and that really became evident for us that that is something that we, we were putting it on the victim and that it is so evident that we need to be putting it on the offender. And he is the offender, or the perpetrator. And it's not necessarily a him always, but we need to get back to that in that, you know, that mom what are her protective factors, but how can he be held accountable and what can we ask him to be doing or requiring him to do? And if he's not following through, what steps do we have and what safeguards do we have and who can we be working with? So working with the criminal justice system and the court and the county attorney's office and how can we build that relationship? So, moving forward and how can we collaborate with Rose and some of those other players to make some of that happen in the future? And implementing some of those recommendations. And then some of the other really simple changes are we've talked about just using language that is more specific about domestic violence or not so passive when we talk about a case. Instead of saying the parents were fighting, saying that dad punched mom in the face. And, actually, we started instituting that. All cases, not just domestic violence cases, but sexual abuse cases and physical abuse cases because it really iterates what is going on in the family system when we talk about cases instead of just really sugar coating it and keeping it kind of passive and making sure that we're clear about what's going on. And we recognize that right now there's a lot of legislative changes to the system going on in Minnesota so we're trying to implement some of this along with all of that. And thankfully a lot of it goes hand in hand and they're consistent with one another and we'll be moving in the right direction to keep kids and families safer.

- **[Voiceover]** Yeah, you know, and I know, Rose, I know you have a number of things on the state level that were identified to change and I'm sorry we don't have time to go over those, and we have-- So, there's a number of things that you guys have identified that now is kind of on your list of when the new legislature comes together, to kind of start talking to them about and start talking to, you know, MSSA, the Minnesota Social Services Association, and other folks about moving this forward. And I know, Rose, that's one of the things that you're working on. And I'm also, I'm totally feeling bad that we don't have time to talk about that, but I also wanted to see because I saw in the chat as well that there were a number of questions that came up and before we kind of close out, I wanted to get a chance to answer those. So, Denise? What'cha got?

- **[Voiceover]** There's just a couple of questions. One of them I think Jessica already replied to in terms of the motion about failure to protect. I mean, bringing that concept into the work by charging mothers with failure to protect rather than taking the focus on the batterer. Then there was someone else who's asking about the differential response and how this applies in a state or community with differential response, which has changed a little bit with, I think it was Amber. The motion, I think it's what we call alternative response in Minnesota where the Child Protection does not make a finding, but might still offer services or open a case. And then the final one is about funding that's kind of initiative, those are the three things that came up.

- **[Voiceover]** Okay, well let me just turn and say, Jessica, what's your sense of differential response? Is that, do you guys do it?

- **[Voiceover]** We do, yeah, we absolutely do it and actually in Minnesota it's called family assessment response now. They're one of the proposals is that it actually just be called differential response, but who knows if that's going to happen. But 99% of our domestic violence cases are handled differential response unless there is serious harm in front of the children or serious threats, life threatening harm to the parent.

- **[Voiceover]** Did you look at any of those cases when you were doing this assessment or were you looking at those cases where you actually opened a case and there was fairly extensive Child Protection involvement?

- **[Voiceover]** Both. We looked at both types of cases and we made sure to pull a cross section of both types of cases for this process so we could get a good understanding of is there a better way? One way or another? So I believe we pulled several cases that were a family assessment, which is a differential response, there was a traditional response case that was pulled, and then there was a placement case that was pulled as well. Where a kid ended up in placement due to domestic violence. Which is very few and far between in our agency.

- **[Voiceover]** Right, and let me just add, too, that this is not typical of across the state either and this is one of the reasons that we're looking to do some more standardization because there is room for interpretation and, you know, I know certain counties where they open a case just by virtually the fact that there's domestic violence. Pow, it's opened and a standard investigation. So that's one of the things

we're calling for at the state level is please clarify what you mean by threatened injuries. You know, 'cause it's not entirely clear and because there isn't a lot of standardization, let's say, or written guidance that people will go, "Oh, well obviously we gotta get in here." So Wright County erred more on the side of caution and I think, again, this is because of the supervision where they understood the dynamics more and had some of that sorted out. But I always kept saying, you know, "What if you won the lottery tomorrow?" "How do we institutionalize what you know and put it "into writing?" How can we mine what you know and make it standard "and pass it on and make it part of better practice?" So, you know, it cut both ways. Not only what's missing, but what's present that if we canned it and sold it would make a change here, right?

- **[Voiceover]** Right. So I'm gonna jump in here 'cause we're out of time and I wanted to thank, I wanted to thank you, Rose, for being on our call again this month and I want to thank Marianne and Jessica for helping us understand, kind of, the process. And also for guiding us with this tool. You know, for being willing to test it out and to give us guidance and for being on this webinar today. Thank you both. Thanks Denise for jumping in and handling the chat. And Liz, thank you as always, we wouldn't be able to do these without you. (giggles) And if you all have any questions, and let me just say, next month, as soon as you get back from your holidays, you should tune in on January second. We will be talking about the institutional analysis process, it'll be an introduction to the institutional analysis process. So, what we talked about today is a tool designed that incorporates institutional analysis and then it's designed to kind of looking at, you know, looking at child welfare response. And then earlier in the summer we talked about best practice assessment tools that were also kind of spun out from the institutional analysis. So for those of you who've been kind of listening, if you want to kind of start at day one, scratch one, institutional analysis what is it, how you use it, what's its purpose? That kind of thing, we're gonna have an introduction to the institutional analysis process on January second. So just perfect after the holidays. You've been shopping, you've been returning stuff, you've been having fun, now come back and here's the beginning of the institutional analysis process. So, that'll be on January second at two, central time. And with that, we'll talk about funding as well, how to find funding sources, some options for funding for institutional analysis. So hopefully respond to the question that we didn't get to today. And with that I'll say thank you all very much for joining us and I hope this was helpful.

- **[Voiceover]** All done?

- **[Voiceover]** Yes.

- **[Voiceover]** The recommendations from Wright County will be on the Praxis website, so watch that. In a couple weeks they'll be up there. Probably by next week.

- **[Voiceover]** Oh great, okay. That's good for folks to know. So you can come back, and also this webinar recorded should be on there as well. Alright, thank you all very much.

- **[Voiceover]** And follow up resources, and an evaluation.

- **[Voiceover]** Yay. (laughter) A race to the finish line here.

- **[Voiceover]** That's right, thanks everybody, take care.

- **[Voiceover]** Thank you.

- **[Voiceover]** So long. - [All] Bye.

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