

Research Supports the Intervention Strategies of the Blueprint for Safety

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1. Coordinated work across and within agencies increases protection

- “The core tenet of most coordinated criminal justice responses [is] the belief that a criminal justice system that predictably and routinely entangles offenders in multiple ways improves the odds that any given offender will encounter a response that may alter his behavior.” (Worden, 2003, p. 14)
- A number of studies found that a coordinated intervention in domestic violence cases could have a positive, even cumulative, effect on the behavior of the offender (Murphy, et al., 1998, pp. 278-279; Saunders, 2008, p. 165; Syers and Edleson, 1992, p. 484; Tolman and Weisz, 1995, p. 482; Worden, 2003, p. 13; 2001).
- Sullivan (2006, p. 205) reports an increased responsiveness to victims and improved interagency interactions through a CCR.
- “One large scale study of women in the justice system found that the more battered women perceived different agencies as working together, the more highly they rated them in terms of helpfulness and effectiveness and the more satisfied they were both with the legal system in general and with their own individual case outcomes in particular.” (Goodman and Epstein, 2008, p. 85)
- Russell and Light (2006) found that victims responded well to police when officers were proactive and part of an integrated team.
- Sullivan (2006, p. 205) says “strong leadership, a shared mission, shared power, and a membership extending across more fields” are needed to accomplish goals.
- CCR-related qualities and activities were correlated with higher rates of victim contact with intimate partner violence services in CCR communities when compared to communities without this intervention. These qualities and activities included: developing goals based on community needs, selecting priorities based on the salience of the need in the community, efforts to coordinate services, and disseminating information on the frequency of intimate partner violence in the community. (Klevens, et al., 2008)*
- Zweig and Burt (2006) found that women’s perceptions of whether community agencies were working together to assist her and her case significantly and positively related to arrests in domestic violence and sexual assault cases and to convictions in domestic violence cases. Perceptions that agencies were working together also increased women’s beliefs that law enforcement and prosecution are effective agencies.*
- A study of 48 different domestic violence community collaborations (Nowell, 2009) suggests that the presence of stakeholders who are perceived to be out of sync by other stakeholders with regards to their understanding of domestic violence, but do not acknowledge this apparent disconnect, can negatively impact the effectiveness of the collaborative. In other words, a CCR-type entity is more effective when members have a shared understanding of domestic violence.*

2. Outcomes improve when the system treats a domestic violence case as part of ongoing pattern of criminal activity vs. a single event

- Websdale (1999) reminds us that homicides are often preceded by multiple criminal justice interventions.
- In the Quincy study, Buzawa et al. (1998, p. 189) found about half of the offenders had prior arrests for violent offenses and within two years of the last criminal justice intervention, 44% of the offenders were rearrested for domestic violence.
- Hart notes that between the arrest and prosecution, 30% of offenders may re-assault (Goldsmith, 1991, p. 7) and as many as half of domestic violence victims may be threatened with retaliation for cooperation with prosecutors (Davis, et al., 1990, p. 19).
- Batterers can reoffend quickly. Goodman and Epstein (2008, p. 75) say that “20% to 30% of arrested offenders re-assault their partners before the court process has concluded or shortly afterward, often as retaliation for involving them in the court system.”
- In another study, 14% of the victims reported threats from the perpetrator since disposition of their case, 8% had property damaged, 9% experienced new violence, and 37% of perpetrators had been verbally abusive. (Smith, et al., 2001, p. 72)
- Offenders with a ‘stake in conformity’ (employed, married, stable housing) are least likely to reoffend after interaction with the justice system. (Roehl, et al., 2005, p. 14) However, the high-risk offender with a criminal history tends not to change their behavior with criminal justice intervention. “For high risk offenders, even a ‘model’ court has not broken their pattern of intimidation and control and the interventions they have used to date are insufficient. Stopping chronic and/or serial batterers is apt to be a long, difficult process, not easily impacted by any one criminal justice intervention, especially one that is fundamentally compromised by long prosecutorial and judicial delays and restricted to misdemeanor type sentences.” (Hotaling and Buzawa, 2003, p. 26)
- From their study of batterers in four cities, Heckert and Gondolf concluded that “men in the repeat re-assault category were slightly more likely to use a chain of tactics, or multiple tactics, in their violent incidents. That is, their violence was more likely to be excessive and unrelenting.” (2004, p. III-15-8)
- Buzawa et al. (1998, pp. 205 and 198) found that courts are most likely to see entrenched batterers who have had prior involvement with the system and less likely to see those batterers who use occasional violence and have no criminal record. They suggest that the level and conditions of an intervention could be linked to risk markers made visible for each offender.
- Stark (2007, p. 94) points out that the harm in domestic violence is not only due to the number of violent events, but to an accumulation of multiple harms. It is the cumulative effect, rather than a set of isolated acts that affect the victim of battering.
- Erskine (1999, pp. 1207-1232) discusses the importance of exploring ongoing patterns of intimidation and coercion to determine appropriate charges for a range of criminal or violent behaviors.

3. Clear and consistent messages of offender accountability and victim safety can reduce violence

- Worden suggests that “the efficacy of many innovations [in intervention] may be contingent on the consistency of the messages that are exchanged among the victims, offenders, and practitioners” (2003, p. 10).
- Interactions with the police create an important baseline for the victim’s level of trust in the rest of system. Belknap and Sullivan (2003) found that whether victims believed the state was a resource for their help seeking was based on positive interaction with an officer who listened without judgment and communicated empathy. Victims saw police as helpful when they provided legal information, advocacy support, attended to medical care, and paid attention to the needs of the children.
- Goodman and Epstein (2008, p. 78) note, “Other research has shown that women who experience government officials as listening to their stories and responding to their individual needs are more likely to feel treated fairly and therefore to cooperate with the prosecutor’s requests than are women who feel forced into a mandatory model dismissive of their input.”
- Researchers at Texas Women’s University (2003) designed a one-hour phone contact for use with the victim during the processing of a protection order. Their study demonstrated that “abused women offered a safety intervention at the time of applying for a protection order quickly adopt safety behaviors and continued to practice those safety behaviors for eighteen months” (p.8).
- Practitioners can support a victim’s safety planning by providing tactical information about the legal process, legal options, appropriate referrals, and specific communication about the risk of severe violence and lethality. (Johnson, 2007; Kropp, 2008, p. 213)
- In his observation of courtroom interactions in domestic violence cases, Ptacek (1999, pp. 172-178) studied how the interaction between judges, victims, and offenders can support or deter the battering dynamic. He points out that the behaviors demonstrated in the courtroom can (intentionally or not) become another resource the perpetrator can use for intimidation or coercion in the future. To that extent, a victim’s experience of the criminal justice intervention can reaffirm the perpetrator’s messages. Ptacek created a graphic titled “Judicial Responses that Reinforce Women’s Entrapment” to describe some of the behaviors he observed. To demonstrate the potential parallels that victims may find in criminal justice interventions, he lays the judge’s behaviors alongside behaviors used by perpetrators. Ptacek’s graphic is available in a report by Levey, et al. (2000, p. Appendix I-2).
- Robinson and Tregidga (2007) found that taking a holistic multiagency approach to domestic violence can reduce recidivism, even among the population most at risk. The research was conducted with very high-risk victims of domestic violence to determine levels of victimization one year after being referred to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and their perceptions of this type of intervention. Nearly all victims acknowledged the importance of having multiagency support once they were ready to change their situations.*
- One of the first studies to examine community-based outreach in the context of an interdisciplinary community coordinated response to police-reported intimate partner violence found that community-based outreach by victim advocates results in decreased distress levels,

greater readiness to leave abusive relationships, and greater perceived helpfulness of services relative to system-based referrals. (DePrince, et al., 2012a)*

- A randomized longitudinal study found that an outreach program was effective in increasing women's engagement with prosecution, as well as the likelihood of their participating in the prosecution of their abusers. Results were particularly robust among women marginalized by ethnicity and class, and those still living with their abusers after the target incident. (DePrince, et al., 2012b)*

4. Sure and swift consequences for offenders reduce recidivism and the severity of future abuse

- Gondolf (2004) noted a reduction in no-shows and improved completion rates of batterer intervention programs when offenders moved through the system quickly. When intervention was swift and certain, the rate of offenders entering the groups increased from 70% to 95% and the completion rate rose to 70% (p. 619). Gondolf linked the effectiveness of batterer programs to a streamlined system where violations were treated with a 'swift and certain' response, offenders identified as high risk received increased sanctions, and risk markers were monitored throughout the intervention (see discussion on page 624).
- Two additional studies by Gondolf (2000; 1999) verify the impact of swift and sure response for domestic violence offenders.
- In domestic violence cases, the specific language of swift and sure is not commonly used, but several authors do recommend aggressive or prompt response to violations of court orders. (Buzawa et al., 2000; Hofford, 1991, pp. 12-17) One of the four lessons reported from the Judicial Oversight Demonstration project was the importance of "procedures to monitor or educate defendants and provide a quick court response to violations of no-contact orders and other bond conditions." (Visher et al., 2007, p. 9)
- To review a theoretical frame for choice theory and negative sanctions see Pratt (2008) and Kurbrin, et al. (2009).
- A research study conducted by Weisburd, et al. (2008) demonstrated the impact of swift and certain responses to probation violators.
- Klein, et al. (2014) found that prosecution and sentencing of domestic violence cases can significantly reduce re-abuse for the majority of more chronic abusers who also commit non-DV crimes. The research suggests that what matters is the comparative severity of the domestic violence sentencing compared to non-DV sentencing, not the severity of the sentence itself. The researchers recommend that prosecutors and judges sanction crimes against person appropriately, namely more severely than typical non-DV crimes abusers may be arrested for.*

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