

WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT THE BLUEPRINT FOR SAFETY AS AN APPROACH TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRIMES?

The Blueprint is a coordinated community response (CCR), fully articulated. It builds on the groundbreaking work of two Minnesota communities, Duluth and St. Paul, to present the first comprehensive, written interagency plan in the nation for the criminal legal system response to domestic violence crimes, from 911 through sentencing and probation. It unites each step in the process around consistent identification and communication of risk.

The Blueprint is grounded in the experiences of victims of battering and an understanding of how intervention by the criminal legal system affects their lives. It is distinctive in its emphasis on leadership by community-based advocacy and community consultation as ways to accomplish that grounding in victims' lived experience.

The Blueprint establishes an ongoing process of reviewing, monitoring, and adjusting policy and practice to ensure the most protective and accountable response possible, from an emergency call for help through to sentencing and probation. It organizes case processing around: 1) what victims need to be safe; 2) what practitioners need from each other to do their jobs and enhance safety; and 3) what is required by each worker and agency to hold offenders accountable. The Blueprint provides direction for each worker on how to identify, document, act upon, and communicate information about risk and danger. It provides direction on how to engage with victims to form partnerships and promote safety. The Blueprint requires adjusting interventions in ways that avoid and correct unintended harmful consequences and disparity of impact.

The overall design and function of the Blueprint for Safety rest on several core features, all of which must be present for a community to say that it is developing and implementing a Blueprint response to domestic violence crimes.

1. A functioning interagency group, such as a Coordinated Community Response Team (CCR)
2. A commitment to the Blueprint Foundational Principles as an approach to domestic violence cases
3. A commitment to ground the Blueprint in the experiences of victims of violence and an understanding of how the intervention of the criminal legal system affects their lives
4. Agreement to use the Blueprint Essential Elements and templates to revise, adapt, or develop policies, protocols, or other documents to guide the work of agencies and practitioners in the criminal legal system
5. Agreement by criminal legal system agencies to engage in an ongoing process of guiding and supervising practitioners to ensure that Blueprint practices are being implemented

6. Commitment to an ongoing interagency process to review and monitor the work of each agency
7. An ongoing process of adjusting policies and practices, retraining, and providing new direction to workers, as informed by regular monitoring of domestic violence case processing

The Blueprint for Safety is a coordinated community response fully articulated to organize the entire criminal legal system around the Blueprint principles and the experiences of victims of violence. The Blueprint is an ongoing process of adaptation, implementation, and monitoring framed by a collective policy and accountability. The Blueprint requires:

1. A functioning interagency group, such as a Coordinated Community Response Team (CCR)
 - The Blueprint requires an interagency group that includes community advocates and representation from the primary agencies that handle cases of domestic violence crimes. Such groups often operate under the title of “coordinated community response” (or CCR). The CCR typically meets periodically—usually monthly, but sometimes bi-monthly or quarterly—for the purpose of addressing the community response to domestic violence.
 - Some CCR-type teams include representation from other community agencies such as child welfare, members of the medical and educational fields, social services, and counseling/therapy. The Blueprint does not require this broader involvement, but must include the key criminal legal system agencies, from 911 and police to prosecution, courts, and probation. In the Blueprint for Safety, the interagency group has significant participation and leadership from community advocates.
 - The interagency group may take up a number of aspects of the community response, including case review, policy development, training needs assessment and events. It has a key role in identifying gaps in the community response. The Blueprint takes this work to a fully developed level and puts the group’s knowledge and experience to work in building a comprehensive framework for organizing the response to domestic violence.
2. A commitment from the interagency group members to pursue an approach to domestic violence cases based upon the six Blueprint Foundational Principles:
 - Adhere to an interagency approach to domestic violence
 - Adjust the response based on the context and severity of what is occurring
 - Recognize that domestic violence is a patterned crime requiring continuing engagement with victims and perpetrators
 - Ensure swift and sure consequences for continued abuse
 - Send messages of help and accountability to victims and perpetrators
 - Reduce unintended consequences and disparity of impact of intervention

This commitment extends to individual agencies as well as the united response of the Blueprint as a collective policy. All policy adaptations must adhere to these principles.

3. Commitment to ground the work of the Blueprint team in the experiences of victims of violence, with specific attention to how criminal legal system intervention affects their lives
 - Community-based advocacy provides a setting where victims of battering can speak confidentially and openly—including those who are fearful of and try to avoid the criminal legal system. Because community-based advocacy is uniquely situated to bring victims' experiences and concerns forward, it has a central role in Blueprint leadership and partnerships.
 - Intervention by the criminal legal system affects victims in different ways, often with unintended harmful impacts. The Blueprint builds this awareness into policy and practice, with attention to the complex and often dangerous implications of a victim's collaboration with interveners.
 - The Blueprint acknowledges and seeks effective intervention that accounts for the realities of peoples' unique circumstances and social standing.
 - One way the Blueprint stays grounded in victims' experiences is to establish and maintain an advisory group of survivors who can help direct the process of adapting and implementing the Blueprint.
4. Agencies in the criminal legal system agree to use the Blueprint Essential Elements and templates to revise, adapt, or develop policies, protocols or other documents
 - Blueprint content is incorporated into the agency standard operating procedures or other documents that spell out what workers are required to do.
 - If it is not possible to incorporate all Essential Elements, most must be included along with an explanation of why some are not (e.g., where local law or court structure does not allow for the Blueprint requirement or if an element is covered by another agency's procedures).
 - When Essential Elements are missing, there is a commitment by the specific agency and the Blueprint team to work towards eventual inclusion of whatever is missing to the fullest extent possible.
5. Agreement by criminal legal system agencies to engage in an ongoing process of guiding and supervising workers to ensure that Blueprint practices are being implemented
 - There is a regular process of case review (e.g., listening to 911 calls, reviewing reports, observing on-scene or in the courtroom, case tracking) to identify any problems in how Blueprint policy and practice is applied.
 - Agency practitioners receive timely guidance and training to reinforce Blueprint practices and correct any problems in implementation.

6. Commitment to an ongoing interagency process to review and monitor the work of each agency
 - The Blueprint for Safety is a collective policy: i.e., while there are agency-specific policies and protocols for processing cases, criminal legal system agencies have a shared purpose and goals that reflect the Blueprint foundational principles.
 - Interagency monitoring seeks to determine how that collective policy is working by examining (a) whether workers are doing what was intended under Blueprint policies and protocols, (b) the results of Blueprint implementation as reflected in statistical data, and (c) the impact of Blueprint changes on the experiences of battered women.
7. An ongoing process of adjusting policies and practices, retraining, and providing new direction to workers based on the monitoring
 - The Blueprint is not a static document, but a living process to ensure that the foundational principles are reflected in policy and practice.
 - The results of the interagency monitoring are reported back to the CCR and to agency heads at least annually.

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