Explore and Prepare: A Blueprint for Safety Community Readiness Checklist

To build and sustain a Blueprint for Safety requires a sound foundation of knowledge, skills, and capacity for making system-wide change. The community readiness questionnaire helps draw a picture of that capacity, including:

* Current level of interagency coordination and problem solving in the community
* Role of community-based advocacy in shaping the criminal legal system response
* Access to basic information about domestic violence-related crimes

The questionnaire identifies community strengths and pinpoints areas that will need more attention in order to establish and maintain the Blueprint.

The questionnaire encourages the kind of discussion and reflection between the criminal legal system and community-based advocacy that is critical to a strong, effective Blueprint. How it is completed and who is involved will vary according to local conditions. For example:

## Community A

The local advocacy organization heard about the Blueprint for Safety and thinks it might be a good fit for the community. It uses the questionnaire internally to debate and strategize around allies, system agency partners, and next steps. Staff complete and discuss the questionnaire as a group.

## Community B

The director of the tribal advocacy organization, police chief, and prosecutor have a long history of working together. They meet regularly and have put some written policy place, but the tribe does not have a formal coordinated community response. They assemble a small group that includes the advocacy director and two advocates, the police chief and two officers, and the prosecutor and a tribal victim/witness specialist. Members of the work group complete the questionnaire individually; they review and discuss the results together before recommending whether or not to proceed with the Blueprint.

## Community C

A countywide coordinated community response has been in place for fifteen years. There is a part-time coordinator and an active steering committee that is interested in using the Blueprint to refresh and expand the CCR. The steering committee wants broad input early on from the CCR partners and others in the community. The coordinator uses an on-line survey tool, such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms, to set up and distribute the questionnaire. Invitations to complete the questionnaire go to a broad range of advocates, criminal legal system practitioners, and community members. The steering committee presents the results at the CCR’s annual retreat as a first step in adapting the Blueprint.

 Whatever the method used to distribute and complete the questionnaire, the final step is an in-person discussion among Blueprint organizers to review the results and answer the following summary questions. A community that can answer “yes” to most of these questions is in a strong position to adapt, implement, and sustain a Blueprint for Safety. Answering “no” does not mean that adapting the Blueprint will be impossible, but the process will be more challenging. The Blueprint’s systemic, unified approach requires basic working relationships, agreement to work together, willingness to identify and solve problems, and curiosity about how the community can strengthen its efforts to stop violence, reduce harm, and save lives.

## Yes, in our community . . .

* Community-based advocates have a central role in commenting on and shaping the criminal legal system’s response to domestic violence.
* Community-based advocates and key leaders in the criminal legal system are accustomed to working together to identify and solve problems.
* We are curious and transparent about our response to domestic violence crimes.
* We seek out best practice rather than assuming that what we have been doing is the most effective approach.
* We are committed to a united approach with a shared purpose and goals.
* We can agree upon adhering to the Blueprint foundational principles to guide the response to domestic violence crimes.
* We can establish the necessary coordination.
* We can establish sufficient authority and resources to sustain the Blueprint.

A template for the questionnaire begins on the following page. Copy and use as-is or adapt the content to create a customized version or on-line survey.

# Twenty Questions: Are We Ready to Become a Blueprint for Safety Community?

|  |
| --- |
| ABBREVIATIONS• Blueprint: Blueprint for Safety• CCR: Coordinated community response• CLS: Criminal legal system/criminal justice system |

|  | Yes/Always | No/Rarely | Sometimes | Need More Information | Notes* What or who is missing?
* What are likely barriers?
* What are likely strengths?
* What do we need to know more about?
 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Basic data related to the number and disposition of domestic violence-related crimes is readily available.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. An interagency group/CCR exists to identify and solve problems.
* If yes, go to question 4
* If no, go to question 3
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. Even though no interagency group/CCR exists, there is interest in starting one.
* If yes, go to question 10
* If no, it is unlikely that your community is ready for the Blueprint. Conclude the questionnaire and seek how-to information about starting a CCR.[[1]](#footnote-2)
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. The interagency group/CCR includes representation from:
	1. Community-based advocacy
	2. 911/Emergency Communications
	3. Police/Sheriff
	4. Prosecution
	5. Victim/Witness Services
	6. Probation
	7. Courts
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. Community-based advocacy has a leadership role in the interagency group/CCR.
* If yes, go to question 7
* If no, go to question 6
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. Identify what would need to change for community-based advocacy to have a leadership role in the interagency group/CCR.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. The interagency group/CCR has experience in studying and assessing how community systems respond to domestic violence: e.g., completed a Praxis Safety & Accountability Audit, conducted a fatality review, contributed to a university-based research project.
* If yes, go to question 8
* If no, go to question 9
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. Describe the problems that such study or assessment identified.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. The interagency group/CCR is involved in writing agency-specific policies (e.g., the CCR has a role in drafting and/or reviewing the police department policy).
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. Written policies are in place that direct the CLS response to domestic violence.
* If yes, go to question 10
* If no, go to question 11
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. Domestic violence-specific policies are in place for:
	1. 911/Emergency Communications
	2. Police/Sheriff
	3. Prosecution
	4. Victim/Witness Services
	5. Probation
	6. Other
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. Local CLS agencies are likely to see the Blueprint as *unnecessary* because policies are already in place.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. Local CLS agencies are likely to see the Blueprint as *intrusive* (i.e., believe that no outside practitioners or community members should be involved in shaping agency policy and practice).
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. The interagency group/CCR or local advocacy organization regularly gathers feedback from victims/survivors about CLS intervention.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. The interagency group/CCR or key CLS agencies act to anticipate, identify, and reduce unintended harmful consequences and disparity in the CLS response to domestic violence crimes.
* If yes, go to question 16
* If no, go to question 17
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. Examples of action taken to identify and reduce unintended harmful consequences and disparity.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. CLS agencies will support a collective policy with ongoing agency-specific and interagency monitoring.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. CLS agencies will provide access to their case records and statistical data in order to assess current practice.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. CLS agencies will provide personnel to participate in all phases of Blueprint development and implementation: assess current practice, write and adapt policy, implement new practices, and monitor agency and CLS response.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| 1. The community has a strong commitment to curiosity and creative problem solving in how we understand and intervene in battering.
 | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |

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1. For information about how to establish a coordinated community response, see the resources and technical assistance available via the Battered Women’s Justice Project, [www.bwjp.org](http://www.bwjp.org). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)