

The Saint Paul



Saint Paul's Response: How to Boost Your CCR's Work to the Next Level

July 23, 2018

“This project was supported by Grant No. [2016-WE-AZ-0013](#) awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings and conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this program are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.”

Introductions

- Bree Adams Bill, **Saint Paul Blueprint for Safety Coordinator**
 - The Saint Paul & Ramsey County Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
- Tara Patet, **Senior Prosecutor**
 - The Saint Paul City Attorney's Office

Objectives

- Identify the risk and danger associated with domestic abuse offenders who flee the scene.
- Develop sure and swift responses to hold dangerous offenders accountable when they flee the scene before law enforcement responds.
- Evaluate the results of implementing a coordinated model for persistent domestic abusers when they are gone on arrival.

Demographics

- Capital City of Minnesota, Saint Paul: Pop. 295,000
- Located in Ramsey County: Pop. 526,000
- Domestic Abuse-Related 911 calls in Saint Paul: 5,000-6,000
- The Saint Paul & Ramsey County Domestic Abuse Intervention Project: 5,800 victims and their children per year

The Problem

GOAs = Gone On Arrival (Offenders Who Flee)

Defining the Problem

- Approximately half of domestic violence offenders flee the scene prior to police arrival, regardless of level of crime or injury
- Officers often fail to conduct a search or seek a warrant for fleeing offenders
- Offenders who flee are often more dangerous, more likely to reoffend, and more likely to commit other crimes

Common Response

- When offender had fled the scene, case treated as lower priority
- Long processing time for prosecutors
- Low charging and conviction rates

Common Response Cont'd

- Slow (or no) victim engagement
- Negative messages sent to victims, responding officers and offenders
- Delayed response and unintended consequences for victims

Real-Life Experience of Victims

“He got to just knock out my teeth then come right back. So, you know, what was I gonna do? He was back. Back in the house. Didn’t matter what I had to say about it.” –Survivor

Real-Life Experience of Victims Cont'd

“By the time he was arrested for knocking my teeth out, it had been like 5 or 6 months! He had come back the next day (after knocking out my teeth) and it was like nobody even cared.” -
Survivor

The Solution

The Saint Paul Blueprint for Safety

Identify Gaps

- Safety and Accountability Audit (Praxis International) uncovered this problem in St. Paul
- The Audit found that no clear protocol existed for officers to locate and apprehend offenders who left the scene
- Long delays in charging these cases meant that many offenders were able to evade accountability

911 Solution

- 911 dispatchers gather more information to aid in apprehension
- Inquire if the suspect has left the scene and where the person might have gone
- Elicit level of fear
- Stay on the phone with caller until they feel safe

Law Enforcement Solution

- Look for the suspect on approach and upon arrival at the scene
- Conduct a thorough on-scene investigation
- Use every available avenue to aid in swift apprehension
- Provide additional support and resources to the victim

Law Enforcement & Prosecution Solution

- Next-day collaborative review
- Taking risk & danger into consideration – prioritize cases
- Value in early review and charging
- Prosecutors within a collaborative role – then and now

Probation Solution

- Notification to probation officers
- “Sure and swift” consequences for probation violations
- Coordinates arrest of probationers with police if evading arrest
- Warrants issued resulting in quicker arrest

Advocate Role

- Advocates respond with heightened urgency as “in-custody” cases
- Read police/incident reports with a different lens
- Explain the unique process and warrantless arrests
- Check-ins with investigators and prosecutors for charging decision

Advocate Partnerships

- Partnership across disciplines
- First Light Team: Advocacy and Law Enforcement
- Communicate with victims about further investigations

The Results

Law Enforcement Results

- Immediate feedback for patrol
- Decrease in pending cases
- Close gaps of victims falling through the cracks

Prosecution Results

- Shorter processing time
- Quicker victim engagement = increased victim participation
- Higher charging and conviction rates
- Prosecution will take chances on cases posing higher risk

Prosecution Results Cont'd

One Year Pre-GOA Project:

Cases Charged	49
Total Convictions	35
Avg. Time to Charging	76 days

One Year Post-GOA Project:

Cases Charged	209
Total Convictions	113
Avg. Time to Charging	8 days

Case Example #1

Johnny Ray Martin, Case #09-209-131

On Sept. 28, 2009, Martin's girlfriend called 911 to report a Violation of Order for Protection. Martin was GOA. The following day, LE and prosecutor reviewed reports and searched his arrest history. They discovered he had a pending DA against same victim scheduled for trial October 12 and that he was on conditional release with a no contact order. The prosecutor promptly charged violations of these orders and a warrant was issued. The trial attorney and CR supervisor were also alerted, so that he was held pending his trial. The new offense provided additional evidence of guilt as well as leverage in obtaining a plea. He was convicted of domestic assault.

Case Example #2

Daniel Vessenmyer, Case #17-125-730

An anonymous caller reported an assault by Vessenmyer against his ex-girlfriend on Sept. 18, 2016. The victim has slightly visible injuries but denied an assault took place. There were no witnesses. However, Vessenmyer was extremely intoxicated at the scene and taken to detox. The following day, LE and prosecutor reviewed the reports and arrest history. They concluded the new assault was not chargeable; however they discovered that he was on probation for a felony domestic assault, with a condition that he abstain from the use of alcohol. The prosecutor forwarded the report to his PO, who filed a probation violation and issued a warrant. Vessenmyer was arrested as he was released from detox.

Real-Life Experiences of Victims Now

- “It felt like what happened to me really mattered.”
- “I knew they (police, prosecution, judge) had my back.”
- “I was like, ‘Oh no, you (abuser) don’t get to get away with it!’ I felt so strong.”

Maintaining Momentum

Assessing Effectiveness

Upkeep

- Checks and balances, oversight = Steering Committee
- Internal training to address staff turn-over
- Problem-solving groups
- Bringing in expertise as we need it

Upkeep Cont'd

- Internal Monitoring
- Interagency Monitoring
- Maintain partnerships with advocates
- Focus Groups

Check It Out

- Are offenders who flee cases treated with the same urgency as in-custody cases?
- Are victims receiving these messages?
 - We are here to help
 - We believe you
 - You don't deserve to be harmed
 - We want to help stop it and protect you

Check It Out Cont'd

- Are offenders receiving these messages?
 - You can't blame others
 - You need to stop this behavior
 - It doesn't "pay to flee" – If you leave the scene before police arrive, you will still be charged and apprehended swiftly
 - If you want to change, there is help available

Contact Details

- **Bree Adams Bill, Saint Paul Blueprint for Safety Coordinator**
 - The Saint Paul & Ramsey County Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
 - ba@stpaulintervention.org
- **Tara Patet, Senior Prosecutor**
 - The Saint Paul City Attorney's Office
 - tara.patet@ci.stpaul.mn.us