Successful coordination of criminal justice responses to domestic violence doesn’t just happen. It takes a strong concerted effort to create the will to examine your own system, evaluate current problems, and establish new policies and procedures. One such effort is the St. Paul Blueprint for Safety, built on 30 years of experience and research on coordinated community responses (CCRs). In the simplest terms, the Blueprint is three things. First, it’s an approach: a shared, coherent way of thinking about domestic violence cases and what types of intervention are effective. It’s also a document outlining the comprehensive interagency policies and practices designed to guide that collective approach. Finally, once in place, the Blueprint institutionalizes a process of ongoing evaluation that results in continual adjustments to practice as needed to address gaps in response.

With leadership by the St. Paul Police Department, the City Attorney’s Office, the Saint Paul & Ramsey County Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (SPIP) and Praxis International, work on the Blueprint began in 2009 and involved:

- 10 Criminal Justice System agencies
- Local domestic abuse advocacy agencies
- Multiple victim focus groups and impact panels
- Cross-cultural community input

The Blueprint took one year to write and its implementation began in 2010. The Blueprint was built upon and influenced by the pioneering CCR work in Duluth, MN, the successful collaborative work in St. Paul, and best practices throughout the entire domestic violence field. There are Six Foundational Principles of Effective Intervention incorporated into the Blueprint. They are designed to correct the ways that government agencies are organized that create poor outcomes for victims and their families.

In 2013, new funding enabled SPIP to enhance its Blueprint efforts, further monitor its implementation and create an instrumental position - the St. Paul Blueprint Enhancement Coordinator. Bree Adams Bill, an advocate

**Foundational Principles**

1. **Adhere to an interagency approach and collective intervention goals.** We all have to work together in order to be successful.

2. **Build attention to the context and severity of abuse into each intervention.** Not all violence is the same. Practitioners must adjust what they do to the level of violence that is occurring.

3. **Recognize that most domestic violence is a patterned crime requiring continuing engagement with victims and offenders.** As an on-going, patterned crime, practitioners are directed to engage with victims in specific ways.

4. **Ensure sure and swift consequences for continued abuse.** Quick, sure and fair intervention is needed for continued violence and escalated aggression.

5. **Use the power of the criminal justice system to send message of help and accountability.** Messages from practitioners need to be consistent and counter the messages of battering.

6. **Act in ways that reduce unintended consequences and the disparity of impact on victims and offenders.** Avoid doing more harm than good.
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with SPIP, is the Coordinator and it’s her task to establish and conduct monitoring to institutionalize Blueprint policies, prevent relapses and continue to evolve the Blueprint model. Without constant vigilance, practices can become neglected, accountability may fade, and the lived experiences of battered women can get lost. Bree coordinates and supports efforts to advance the Blueprint as an organic document that incorporates real practice learnings and evolutions on a continuous basis.

Monitoring has elevated the way the community works together to a new and vital level. The Blueprint builds in both intra- and inter-agency monitoring, creating an inventive, thriving structure for ongoing problem-solving.

**Intra-Agency Monitoring**

Intra-agency monitoring required that each agency policy within the Blueprint include directives to supervisors to review or monitor cases for compliance. For example:

**911**

The supervisor directives in the 911 policy state that a review of DV calls and CAD (computer-aided dispatch) transcripts needs to occur regularly, followed by actual, detailed feedback provided to the call-takers.

**St. Paul Police**

Commander Joshua Lego, previous supervisor of the Family and Sexual Violence Unit of the St. Paul Police, noted an excellent level of compliance from officers regarding use of recommended questions regarding dangerousness to be posed to victims. Compliance is achieved through daily feedback to the officers who write reports. Emails sent to report writers are copied to every officer who was at the scene. Often, the feedback is praise for doing the right thing. He says compliance checks have shaped and changed how police respond.

**Prosecution**

Tara Patet, Assistant St. Paul City Attorney, supervises the Domestic Violence Unit and it is her job to review each case as part of the internal review. She checks how victim contacts have been made, how and why resolutions have been documented and whether attorneys have written out a full analysis. These things were not done prior to implementing the Blueprint. The policies were not in place and there was not the same attention to oversight.

**Probation**

Supervisors review 3-5 cases quarterly for compliance, such as pre-sentence Investigation (PSI) reports and correlating recommendations and probation violations, etc.

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“Without the monitoring built into the Blueprint, the changes can become a three ring binder that just sits in a drawer. “

Tara Patet, Assistant City Attorney, St. Paul, MN
Inter-Agency Monitoring

Inter-agency monitoring involves small teams of Blueprint practitioners who periodically examine random case files from a multi-disciplined, collective perspective. An example of a Blueprint small team would be an advocate, law enforcement and prosecutor reviewing a minimum of five cases to ensure policies, protocols and practices of the Blueprint are implemented, followed and working. Interagency monitoring is essentially a form of checks balances, seeking to find out if the intent of the Blueprint is truly realized.

The Blueprint coordinator’s role is critical to organizing and conducting inter-agency monitoring. Bree Adams Bill organized a Blueprint review/monitoring team, consisting of herself, a law enforcement representative, and a national TA provider and systems change advocate from Praxis International. The goal of the Blueprint Review Team is to have one consistent group provide guidance and leadership for all Blueprint government agencies during the monitoring process. As each agency’s monitoring is conducted, representatives of that agency will join the review. The Blueprint Review Team then meets with individual agency leaders to plan together the monitoring details.

The Blueprint Review Team discusses current agency protocols, and each member’s and the specific practitioners’ insights on what’s working and what needs improvement. At that point, the Review Team begins to formulate what the actual monitoring would look like and plans the practice assessment and case file review. The Review Team identifies the practices within the agency’s Blueprint policy they want to review, modifies the Review Team checklist tool to more specifically examine each case, identifies which types of cases will be examined, and determines who from the agency will participate in the actual review. Each agency’s representative organizes and pulls their own case files.

A confidentiality agreement created to cover data privacy laws to protect government data considered non-public is signed by non-government team members (i.e., SPIP and Praxis International). Moreover, the entire Review Team works under the explicit agreement that members will not discuss or share information from the review with anyone outside of the team. It is upon each government agency themselves to: a) determine what will or will not be shared outside of the meeting, and b) create internal communications regarding issues found and methods to address them. Once these agreements are finalized, they set forth as a team to review case files.
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Case Reviews/Practice Reviews

Bree emphasized the interagency review isn’t about “catching” individual practitioners doing a poor job. While that can happen, of course, most poor outcomes or areas for improvement are about how the overall work is organized. Therefore, that is the primary focus of the interagency case and practice review. The reviews take about 2-3 hours per meeting; sometimes, there is only one meeting needed for an agency review, and other times an agency review will take 2 or 3 meetings (i.e. having to listen to 911 calls or review prosecution case files). While the Review Team primarily reviews case files, some reviews do entail direct observations of the workers (i.e. sitting in as 911 staff answer calls or observing the processing of warrants in the Sheriff’s Office) or analyzing text and data. The team examines between 12-50 cases for each agency review. It is extremely effective that the core Blueprint Review Team members stay consistent and are joined by professionals from each Blueprint agency currently being reviewed.

Bree asserts that it is natural for on-the-spot problem solving to occur during the actual review process, and in addition, areas that have not been identified initially as necessitating a review may surface.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Monitoring planning meetings</th>
<th>Inter-agency Monitoring (Case Reviews)</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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| Jan Febr Mar                 | Advocates 911 LE Prosecution Pre-trial | 911 call review x 4 LE CAD reviews x 3 911 calls/CAD reports History of violence, victim engagement, weapons documentation, language access LE supervisor reviewed several months of reports that didn’t result in arrest or prosecution (“advise”)
| Apr May Jun                 | Advocates 911 LE Prosecution           | LE Patrol 34 police reports/CAD reports Victim engagement, risk questions compliance, evidence collection, advocate referrals, witness interviews, language access 16 misd. gross misd. felony cases Victim engagement, history of violence, language access, evidence collection |
| Jul Aug Sep                 | Advocates 911 LE Prosecution           | Prosecution 25 case files Victim engagement, language access, charging decisions, plea offers |
| Oct Nov Dec                 | Advocates Sheriff Prosecution Probation | Sheriff: court security Pre-trial: bail evuls Sheriff: warrants Probation: PSIs Probation: Supervision | 7 in court violation arrest cases Victim engagement, detailed reports for prosecution 12 bail evaluations DV history, making violence visible, victim engagement Multiple active vs cleared warrants Observed warrant process 12 PSIs History of domestic violence, making violence visible, incorporating risk and danger, victim engagement 48 felony violation of no contact order cases Victim engagement, probation violation recommendation, risk and danger assessment |

Sometimes a practitioner discovers something that needs strengthening within their own agency and goes back to improve those practices and protocols. For example, within the City Attorney’s Office’s review it became clear that SPIP legal advocates needed to connect with the city’s screening attorneys prior to arraignment to share pertinent additional information (with the victims’ permission) regarding evidence not collected or a medical visit occurring after the police left the scene, etc. Such advocate contacts with victims also generate critical information on what the victim wants as far as conditions of release, DA or CD programming or what they’d be comfortable with if a plea agreement was made. Sharing this information was far more impactful at the point of pre-arraignment—than at the actual arraignment hearing. This important process change for SPIP advocates came directly from the review of the St. Paul City Attorney’s Office.

Figure 1: SPPD Sgt. Dave McCabe, St. Paul City Attorney Tammie Larsen, St. Paul BP Coordinator Bree Adams Bill, SPPD Sgt. Jesse Mollner

Figure 2: A Year’s Schedule for Monitoring
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Finally, when all the practice/case review meetings are completed for an agency, a summary of the findings reports are developed and provided to each agency head. All Findings Reports include recommendations for change or improvement, and suggestions for staff training if it appeared that would benefit the agency.

**Agency meetings**

City attorney’s office and SPIP meet regularly to strengthen their relationship. While both met sporadically in the past, having these meetings institutionalized is extremely productive. The City Attorney has daily contact with all family violence investigators. Although this successful practice was in place before (regarding offenders who fled the scene) it has now been augmented by the new Blueprint practices, i.e. risk questions in LE reports, etc. In summary, although many other inter-agency meetings occurred in past, the Blueprint has made them not only more comprehensive, but more cohesive in obtaining their shared vision.

**Victims Focus Groups**

In addition to obtaining input from advocates prior to each agency’s monitoring/review, culturally diverse focus groups of victims (with an awareness that the majority of DV crimes are against females) are conducted periodically to get a better sense of their lived experience regarding specific issues under review. For example, when analyzing the impact of criminal no contact orders (called Domestic Abuse No Contact Orders – DANCOs) focus groups were questioned about how DANCOs were helpful or not, and the reasons why. Bree goes directly to victims to learn how they are impacted by the policies, protocols and practices that have been put into place. In-depth information from the focus groups guides the work of the advocates, which in turn, informs the policies, protocols and practices of the criminal legal system.

**Blueprint Steering Committee**

The Blueprint Steering Committee meets regularly to monitor the intended goals and operations of the community’s Blueprint for Safety collective policy. The committee focuses on the following questions:

- Are practitioners gathering, documenting, disseminating and building on new information about risk, history, context, severity of violence over time?
- Are responses adjusted for cases involving victims of ongoing violence who use violence?
- Is intra-agency monitoring and accountability, and inter-agency information sharing, cooperation and accountability occurring?

“Prior to Blueprint we did not have any interagency review process at all in looking at these cases. “

Bree Adams Bill, Blueprint Coordinator

“These are very constructive meetings. They will soon include (how best) to improve responses to sexual assaults (in intimate partner relationships)”

Commander Lego, St. Paul Police
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- Do victims get this message?
  - *I’m concerned for your safety – by working together we have the best chance of stopping the violence.*

- Do perpetrators get this message?
  - *This is an opportunity for you to change – to stop the violence and repair the harm you’ve caused; we can help you do that.*

Bree emphasizes that ongoing monitoring at every level is central to the Blueprint’s success; for it creates genuine accountability within agencies and among each other. Scheduled meetings of the Steering Committee ensure an open group process for examining programs and making critical decisions. The collective policies and nature of the Blueprint provide a framework that not only requires, but engenders cooperative buy-in with each necessary step; from planning and conducting the monitoring, to the Steering Committee cultivating and instituting changes throughout the justice system. As a direct service victim advocate, who has been committed to this work for over 20 years, Bree has witnessed firsthand how the Blueprint has truly strengthened their shared mission - as advocates, justice system workers and a community as a whole – towards one day ending domestic violence.

For more information on the St Paul Blueprint for Safety experience, contact Bree Adams Bill ba@stpaulintervention.org. For more information about the Blueprint for Safety model, visit the Praxis International website: [www.praxisinternational.org](http://www.praxisinternational.org).